Bible Stories

For Catholic Children

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BIBLE STORIES FOR CATHOLIC CHILDREN

BY

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ABOUT GOD'S HOLY BOOK

The Bible is the greatest and most important book in all the world. It is the book that God wrote. He wants us to know that He is our Father in Heaven. He loves us and watches over us and leads us safely on the road to Heaven where we will be with Him for all eternity. We will also be with all the Saints and and it will become our true home forever.

God wants all of us to become truly happy and fulfilled in His presence. The only thing that can make us really unhappy is sin and not being with God. Sin dove Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Paradise and brought suffering, sadness and death into the world. From that day on, the only happy people have been those who have lived their lives the way God intended them to live and have protected their souls from rejectling sin in all its forms.

God set His only Son, Jesus, to save us from our sins and to open up the gates of Heaven. He stayed among the people where He lived for thirty-three years to show us an example how to live as the Father wants us to. Jesus Christ is God made human. If we live like Jesus lived and do the things He tells us to do, our lives will be fulfilled. That is why we should know the story of the prophets that foretold of the coming of the Messiah and the story of the Messiah (Jesus) Himself.

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THE OLD TESTAMENT

God loves us and He wants us to know Him. When we read the Bible, we learn the truth about God and His love for us and His plan for us.

In the Old Testament, we read stories from the beginning, how God created the world, to the time before the Birth of His Son, Jesus. The stories are filled with the promises God makes to His people. Even when they disobey Him and do wrong to one another, He never stops loving them.

There are forty-six books in the Old Testament that teach everything about the history of the people of God, about Kings and Prophets, about their exile and their return to the Promised Land. Some books are songs and poems that teach wisdom and love, and promise hope and comfort.

The Old Testament leads us from the beginning of creation and prepares us for the coming of Jesus Christ. As we read the stories, we learn more about how God wants us to live.

THE CREATION OF THE WORLD

Long, long ago, all the beautiful earth which you now see around you: the flowers, the fruits, the fields, the animals, the cool shady trees filled with singing birds, the bubbling brooks -- all of that did not exist. Everything was dark and dreary. There was no warm sun or twinkling stars or pale moon at night to give any light. There were no little boys and girls like you! There was nothing. But even before there were the skies that are so beautiful to look at, there was always Our one God.

God is so good that as he looked down at the darkness, He wished for light. He said: "Let there be light," and so the first day was made. Next, our kind Father separated the light from the dark and created the first day and night -- so, so long ago.

On the following days, God made the sun, moon, and stars. He made the fishes and the birds and all the different kinds of animals. At last, on the sixth day, our Father wanted to make someone who could rule over all of these living creatures, so He took dust from the earth and made a man in His own image: "and the Lord God formed man of the slime of the earth, and breathed into his face the breath of life, and man became a living soul."

Now there was a beautiful place in the world called the Garden of Eden, and God gave this garden to Adam -- for Adam was the name of this first man.

We do not know how long Adam was alone in Paradise, but he talked with God while he was there, and God told him to give names to all of the animals. Sometimes, angels may have also walked with Adam in this beautiful Garden, but there were many hours when he was alone. So that Adam would not be too lonely, God wanted Adam to have a friend. So one day while Adam was asleep, God took a rib-bone out of his side, and he used to make the first woman, whose name was Eve.

On the seventh day, God rested from His work and blessed that day. The Jews called it the Sabbath (which is on Saturday) and kept it for worship. But in honor of our dear Lord's resurrection from the grave on the first day of the week, the Apostles chose Sunday as the day of rest and of special worship for Christians.

THE ANGELS

The first beings created by God were spirits: the beautiful angels. At first, they were all good and happy, but after a while many of them forgot about Him. Of course, this was a sin. God punished the bad angels by sending Michael, the great archangel, to fight against them. He drove them down, down deep into the fires of hell, and ever since they have been called devils. Their leader is often called Satan.

These bad angels don't like God and everything that is good. They also don't like us, and they do all they can to lead us away from our dear Father in Heaven. They are jealous of us, because God is going to give us all of the places in Heaven left empty by them.

But the good angels, those who did not disobey their Maker, are happy with him in Heaven, and they love us very much. Many times, God sends His angels as messengers from Heaven to earth. Haven't you often seen a picture of a lovely woman kneeling in prayer with an angel spreading his wings in front of her? Well, that angel's name was Gabriel, and he was sent by God to the Virgin Mary to tell her that she was going to be the mother of the little baby Jesus. Everyone, every little child, also has a guardian angel who always watches over them. If the child loves and obeys God as they should, if they are obedient at home and do just as their parents tell them to do, and if they are always gentle and kind with other little boys and girls, how closely that dear angel folds their soft white wings around that good little child!

Now, as soon as you open your eyes in the morning, of course you should thank God for keeping you safe through the night. And before going to sleep, you should say a prayer to God for being so kind to you all day long. But maybe after thanking God, you might want to whisper into the ear of your guardian angel just a few words.

ADAM AND EVE

Adam and Eve were very good and happy in their beautiful home.

As they walked around under the shady trees and ate the sweet fruits, God pointed to one tree. He told them that it was against His rules to eat the fruit on that tree.

One day as Eve was walking alone, she came to the tree. There, she met a snake. The devil was jealous of how happy Adam and Eve were, so he turned into a snake to try and tempt Eve. She listened to his voice, and when he told her to eat the fruit which God had told her not to touch, she did as he said and ate it. She also gave some of it to Adam, and he ate it too.

The devil tempted Eve to sin by telling her a lie, and then Eve tempted Adam to sin. Sometimes the devil tempts you to do wrong. Sometimes people do it for him. Whenever the devil or his friends come near you to tempt you to sin, don't pay any attention. Pray to God right away to help you fight against temptation.

Adam and Eve had broken God's commands. They had disobeyed their loving Father, and so the first sin was committed. Oh, what horrible shouts of celebration must have echoed through the lowest depths of hell when the devils found out that their leader had persuaded man to sin against the good God! And oh, how the angels of Heaven must have bowed their heads in sadness!

God was very angry with Adam and Eve for disobeying him. To punish them, he made them leave the Garden of Eden. At the entrance, He put an angel with a flaming sword to stand guard, so that they could never enter the Garden of Eden again.

Even though God punished Adam and Eve for their sin, He still loved them very much. His love for them was so great that He promised that if they were sorry for their sin, He would send a Savior who would open up the gates of Heaven for them and their children, and they would be able to see their loving Father again and be happy with him forever. This Savior was to be Our Lord Jesus Christ.

THE FIRST FAMILY

Just as God sent you, to your father and mother, He also blessed Adam and Eve with children. The oldest was a son named Cain, and Abel was the name of the second boy. Adam had to go out into the fields and work very hard for his little family, but Eve stayed home and took care of the children.

Adam and Eve were very sorry that they had sinned against the good God, and they tried to bring up their little boys to fear and love him. But as Cain and Abel grew older, it grew obvious what different people they were. Cain was a farmer and he was a mean and jealous man. Abel took care of the sheep, and he was meek and gentle.

For his sacrifice, Cain offered fruits to the Lord, while Abel gave the best lamb of his flock, because he thought nothing was too good for the kind Father who had given him so much. Besides, the lamb is gentle, patient, and innocent, so very much like the Savior that God had promised.

God was happy with Abel's gift because he was a good man. But Cain was an evil man, and so God was not happy with his gift. This made Cain angry and he became very jealous. He began to hate his brother.

Cain became more and more jealous, and he hated his brother more and more every day. Finally, one day while working in the fields, Cain killed his brother. God knew what he had done, of course, and for this evil act God cursed Cain and sent him away to live as a wanderer and an outcast. He had to live far apart from his father and mother for the rest of his life.

NOAH AND THE FLOOD

A great many years after God first created the universe and Adam and Eve were first thrown out of the Garden of Eden, the earth became full of very many people. But so many of the people became very bad and committed such awful sins that God said: "I will destroy man from the face of the earth."

But even though the earth was full of sinners, there was still one good man left. His name was Noah. God commanded Noah to build a large wooden ark. ("Ark" is another name for a ship, or a very big boat). God told Noah to take his family with him into the ark, and also to take two of every kind of animal in the world. It took Noah many years to build an ark big enough to fit all the animals that God wanted him to take! During all the years that he spent building it, Noah tried to convince the other people to feel sorry for their sins. But they would not listen to him, and continued to do evil things.

Noah feared God, but he did not fear people, even though they were so evil. At last the time came for Noah and his family and all of the animals to go into the ark. God Himself closed the door from the outside. Then the rain began to fall. It rained and rained for forty days and forty nights, until the earth was covered in enough water to lift the ark high above even the tallest mountain. Everything on earth was drowned: men and women and children and animals and birds. But Noah and those with him in the ark were saved.

When a year had passed by, the waters finally started to go down, and the ark came to rest on the top of a mountain. God told Noah and everyone who was with him in the ark to come out, so they did. The first thing they did when they got out of the ark was to give thanks to God for His goodness in saving their lives. This pleased the Heavenly Father very much. As a sign of His pleasure He made a beautiful rainbow in the sky. As Noah and his family looked with wonder at the many-colored rainbow, God spoke to them and said: "Never again will I destroy mankind by a flood." And then God promised that He would always watch over and protect Noah and his family, and all the people who lived right and did not sin.

ABRAHAM AND ISAAC

Some time after Noah's death, God ordered a holy man named Abraham to leave his own country, where many of the people had become sinful. God told him to go to Canaan instead, which is the Promised Land of the Isrealites. God promised Abraham that he would be the father of a great people, and that because of him all nations would be blessed.

So he took his wife, Sara, and his nephew, Lot, and he went to live in Canaan.

As time went on, the number of sheep and goats that belonged to Abraham and Lot increased very much. Abraham and Lot's servants began to fight about which fields their masters' animals would have to graze in. But Abraham was a peaceful man and did not want any mean words said, not even between his servants and the servants of Lot. To stop the fighting, he let his nephew choose his own fields. The fields Lot chose were near the River Jordan and were very good for animals to graze on. But they were also close to the evil city of Sodom.

Meanwhile, God blessed the faithful Abraham and his wife by sending them a little son, who they named Isaac. When Isaac grew to be quite a large boy, God decided to test Abraham. So he told Abraham to kill Isaac and offer him as a sacrifice. Abraham was brokenhearted, but he was always obedient to the commands of his Heavenly Father, so he took Isaac to a high mountain. He made an altar of stones and tied Isaac to it. He took a sword and was about to sacrifice his son when an angel appeared and said: "Do not harm this boy! I know you fear God, because you obeyed Him even when He told you to sacrifice your only son." Abraham was overjoyed that he did not have to sacrifice his son after all. He looked up and saw a ram in the bushes, and he offered the ram as a sacrifice to God in Isaac's place.

God was so pleased with Abraham's obedience that He blessed him and promised that Isaac's descendents should be "as many as the stars in Heaven, and as the grains of sand that are on the seashore."

REBECCA AT THE WELL

Abraham was now very, very old, and he wanted to see his son Issac get married. But the woman of Canaan worshiped false gods, and he did not want Isaac to marry one of them. So he called his faithful old servant and told him to go into a far-away country, where the women were good and where they still worshipped the true God, to choose a wife for Isaac.

Elizer (for that was the old servant's name) did as his master said, while at the same time he did not forget to pray that the Lord would help him make a good choice. Children should also remember to pray before doing anything very important that God's guidance could help them to do.

Where Abraham lived, people used camels for riding and carrying loads. Elizer took some of Abraham's camels and loaded them with many fine gifts, and then he began his journey. One day on his tip as he was resting beside a well where the women came to get water, he watched and prayed that Isaac's wife might be the one who would offer to give a drink to the camels. Elizer had barely finished his prayer when a beautiful woman with a pitcher on her shoulder came to the well. After giving the old servant a drink, she offered to give water for the camels, too. Like her, you should also always be ready to help others, especially the old and the poor.

When Rebecca gave the camels something to drink, Elizer knew that his prayer had been answered, and that this woman was going to be Isaac's wife. After visiting Rebecca's father's home, Elizer returned to Abraham back in the land of Canaan. He brought Rebecca and her servants with him, and the kind-hearted woman became Isaac's wife.

ESAU AND JACOB

Isaac and Rebecca had two sons: Esau and Jacob. Esau was a hunter, but Jacob took care of the flocks of sheep.

One day when Esau came home from hunting, he was very, very tired and hungry. Jacob was eating a bowl of soup, and Esau asked him if he could have it. Jacob said that Esau could have it if he would sell him his birthright, and Esau agreed. But of course it was wrong for Esau to sell what God had given him.

Later on, Jacob did something that made his brother so angry, that he became afraid that Esau would kill him. He was so afraid that he ran away from home. One night, as he lay on the ground sleeping with a stone under his head for a pillow, he had a strange dream. He saw a ladder reaching from earth to heaven with angels going up and coming down. At the top of the ladder stood God himself, who promised that He would bless Jacob and would give the land of Canaan to him and his descendants. In the morning when Jacob awoke, he picked up the stone that he had used as a pillow and set it up as a monument dedicated to God. He named this place Bethel, which means "House of God." In the same way, children, you should respect the church, which is really the "House of God," and never misbehave while you are there.

Jacob continued on his journey until he came to a place called Haran. In Haran, he became the shepherd of a man named Laban. Later on, Jacob married Laban's daughter, whose name was Rachel.

Many years after this, Jacob wondered if his father and mother were still alive. He took his family and set out for Canaan. As he neared his old home, Esau (who had forgiven his brother in his heart) ran out to meet him and greeted him like an old friend. The old father, Isaac, was very happy to see his dear son once more before his death.

THE STORY OF JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS

Jacob and Rachel had many sons, but out of all of them Jacob loved Joseph the most. To show his love, Jacob gave him a coat of many different colors. It made Joseph's older brothers very jealous.

But what made them even more jealous were Joseph's dreams. He told them about two wonderful dreams that he had had: In one dream, he saw his brother's stalks of grain bow down to his stalks of grain. In the other dream, he saw the sun, moon, and stars all worshipping him.

They sold him as a slave to some men who were on their way to Egypt. The cruel brothers dipped Joseph's coat in the blood of a goat, and they sent it home to their father. When he saw the coat, their father thought a wild animal had killed Joseph, and he cried many tears.

In Egypt, Joseph was sold to an officer of Pharaoh, who was the king of Egypt. While in the officer's service, Joseph ended up in prison.

But Pharaoh had heard about Joseph, and ordered Joseph out of prison so he could ask Joseph what his dreams meant. Joseph told the king that the dreams meant that for seven years, plenty of food would grow in Egypt, but for the next seven years there would be a famine.

The First thing Joseph did was to fill the barns for seven years with grain, so the people would not starve during the famine.

Finally, after seven years, the famine came. Joseph's family went to Egypt to buy food. They saw him, but did not recognize him at all but Joseph recognized them. He gave them the grain as a gift and let them keep their money. Then they came to Egypt a second time, and then Joseph told them who he was.

Joseph's brothers were all very sorry for what they had done, and they were afraid of what Joseph would do to them, but Joseph told them not to be afraid. Then his brothers all embraced him and were all very happy to see him again, and Joseph invited them to come and live with him.

Jacob, the father, lived very happily with his beloved Joseph for many years.

THE BABY MOSES

Many years after the death of Joseph, an evil king ruled Egypt. He was also named Pharaoh. Joseph had very many descendants who now lived in Egypt, and this king was afraid that his descendants (who were called Hebrews, or Israelites) would become too powerful. So he ordered all of the baby boys of the Hebrews had to be thrown into the Nile River and drowned.

At this time, there was a Hebrew woman who had a dear little baby boy who she loved very much. She loved him so much, that she hid him until he was three months old. But eventually she could not hide him for any longer. So she made a basket and covered it on the outside with tar so the water could not get in, making it warm and dry inside. Then she put the baby in the basket just as though it was a cradle, and she hid it in the tall grass that grew on the banks of the river. Then she told Miriam, who was the baby's grown-up sister, to stay nearby and watch.

After a while, King Pharaoh's daughter came to the river with her maids to bathe. When she saw the basket she ordered it to be brought to her. She was delighted when she looked inside and saw a lovely little baby. She knew it must be the child of one of the Hebrew women. The baby was so pretty and sweet that she told one of the maids to give it to her to hold. At that moment, Miriam stepped out of the reeds where she was hiding and asked, "Shall I go and get a Hebrew woman to help take care of the baby?" The princess answered, "Yes." So Miriam went and got her mother, and she became a servant of the princess. The princess had the baby brought up like her own son. She gave him the name of Moses, which means "saved from the water."

Moses was saved from drowning in the waters of the Nile, but Our Lord has saved you from a greater danger, by having the waters of Baptism poured over your heads and making you members of his Church.

MOSES FREES HIS PEOPLE

Moses grew up in the palace of the king. His nurse was his own mother, although he did not know it. She taught him that it was a sin to worship idols and that there was only one true God.

Every year the king of Egypt became more and more cruel to the Hebrews. He even treated them like slaves. When Moses grew up to be a man and saw his own people treated so cruelly, he decided that with God's help he would take them away from Egypt and lead them back to the land of Canaan, where they could be free again.King Pharaoh knew that Moses was a friend of the Hebrews, and so he tried to kill him. But Moses escaped and went to a far-away country, where he became a shepherd. One day while he was on a mountainside with his flocks, God appeared to him in the middle of a bush that was on fire. Moses came near and heard the voice of God say that He would save the Hebrews from the cruelty of Pharaoh and lead them into the Promised Land.

After hearing God's words, Moses returned to Egypt. With the help of his brother Aaron, he began to gather the Hebrews together. This made the king very, very angry, because he did not want to let the people that he made work so hard for him leave his country. But God, who had promised to be with the Hebrews, sent many punishments upon Pharaoh and his followers, and at last the king allowed Moses to lead his people out of Egypt.

God himself showed them the way through the strange countries that they walked through. During the day, He went in front of them in the form of a pillar of cloud. At night, He appeared as a pillar of fire. Soon, the Hebrews reached the Red Sea. They had no boats to cross with, so God, by His Almighty power, separated the waters and made a dry pathway that the Hebrews could walk through to get to the other side. But Pharaoh, meanwhile, was sorry that he had ever let Moses and his people leave Egypt, so he and his army followed them to try and make them come back. When they arrived at the dry path through the Red Sea, they rushed in with their men and their horses. But God made the waters come together again, and He drowned Pharaoh and all of his men.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

For many years the Hebrews wandered through the desert. They were very hungry, but God did not let them starve. Every day, He sent down something like bread from Heaven for them to eat. They called this food Manna.

One day the Israelites came to a mountain called Sinai. On the mountain, God spoke to Moses in the middle of a thunderstorm. He gave him the Ten Commandments written on two tablets of stone. The people were afraid, but Moses told them that God had come to make them fear to sin against Him.

At last, after so many long years of traveling, the Hebrews arrived at the Promised Land. Before entering it, they sent out spies to see what it was like. The spies came back carrying beautiful ripe fruits, and the Hebrews knew then that they were about to enter a rich, good land, the land promised to them by God.

Before his death, Moses reminded the people to be faithful to God at all times and to obey Him in all things. He also told them that they should cross the River Jordan to live in their new home. He told them the sad news that he himself could not enter Canaan, but that another man instead would lead them into the "and flowing with milk and honey."

Just like the Hebrews were finally rewarded by getting to live in the Promised Land of Canaan, so we too will be rewarded if we spend our life loving God on earth by getting to enter our own Promised Land, which is no other place than Heaven. In Heaven, we will live with God forever and ever.

Moses's work was now done. God told him to go to the top of Mt. Nebo. From there, he could see the Promised Land where he knew that his people would live for many years to come. Finally, he died. "The Lord buried him in the valley of Moab, and to this day no one knows where his tomb is."

THE ENTRANCE INTO THE PROMISED LAND

Moses was not allowed to lead the children of Israel into the Promised Land, as you read before, but there was another Hebrew named Joshua who God told to take his place. And so right away Joshua got ready to enter the Promised Land of Canaan.

As the Hebrews came to the Jordan River, the waters separated just like they had done years before in the Red Sea when the Hebrews were running away from King Pharaoh, and a dry path was made to the land on the other side.

At last the Hebrews reached the rich city of Jericho. They needed to find out how strong the city was before they attacked it, so Joshua sent spies into the city. The spies were almost caught, because the king of Jericho knew that the Hebrews were nearby, and his men were looking everywhere for them. But a woman named Rahab hid them on the roof of her house, covered in reeds. When night came, she let them down out of a window, and they went back to Joshua and told him everything that they had found out.

Joshua and his people then walked up to the walls of the great city. God told the priests to pick up the Ark of the Covenant (which was the case where the Ten Commandments were stored) and march around the walls in silence once a day for six days. But on the seventh day, he told them to walk around the walls seven times, and then on the seventh time circling around, to blow their trumpets. They did as God told them, and the people all shouted, and because of God's power the immense walls fell. All of the men, women, and children in the city were killed, except for Rahab and her family.

After that, many more battles were fought by Joshua and his people.

God allowed the Hebrews to take possession of the land of Canaan little by little, and everywhere they went they brought the worship of the one true God.

THE MIGHTY SAMSON

After the death of Joshua, there was still a lot of work to be done. The men chosen to do this work were called Judges. They were good men, and with the blessing of God they made the people more and more faithful.

Many wonderful things happened during this time. You might have heard about the prophet Deborah who was called a "mother in Israel" and who fought against the people who worshipped false gods. Then there is the story of Gedeon, who with his small army fought against and conquered the terrible Madianites.

And who has not heard of the strongest man in the world? The man's name was Samson. It was him who killed a lion with his bare hands, and he, too, tore up the heavy gates of the city of Gaza and carried them away to a high mountain. But later on, Samson sinned. Because of his sin, God allowed Samson to be captured by his enemies. They cut off his long hair and destroyed his eyesight, then they made him a slave. He had to grind grain all day. But one day after his hair had grown long again, he was taken into a temple dedicated to false gods, where they worshipped idols. Samson, all of the sudden, took hold of the pillars of the temple and shook them until the roof of the temple fell in. He, and all of the false worshippers, were crushed and killed by the falling stone.

So died Samson, who was a soldier of God and a hero, just as long as remained faithful to God. But as soon as he gave up on God and sinned, God also gave up on him.

You become soldiers of Christ in Confirmation, and you become strengthened to fight against your enemy: sin. But you must be careful not to trust in your own strength, but only in God's help.

RUTH AND NAOMI

While one of the Judges that you have just read about ruled in Israel, a famine struck the land. Poor people had almost nothing to eat. They had to leave their homes and go to strange lands look for food. One of the people who wandered, looking for food, was a woman named Naomi. She went to a place called Moab with her husband and two sons. While they were there, her sons married Moabite women named Orpha and Ruth, who were non-believers. But after ten years of living there, Naomi's husband and sons died, and their poor old mother was left all alone.

Because she was so lonely, Naomi decided to go back to her old home. Orpha and Ruth did not want her to have to travel all by herself, so they decided to go with her. But Naomi knew how hard it would be for them to leave their own homes, so she told them not to come. Orpha listened to her and stayed, but Ruth would not leave Naomi. She went with her to Bethlehem just as the wheat harvest was beginning.

There was a very rich man living in Bethlehem who was a relative of Naomi's old husband. His name was Booz. When Ruth saw his large fields of wheat, she asked his permission to go and "glean" there.

One evening Booz came into the field. When he saw this beautiful and modest woman, he asked who she was. He was very kind to her. When Ruth asked why he was so kind to her even though she was a stranger Booz explained that he had heard of her faithfulness and loving care towards Naomi, and he promised God he would reward her. Well, the reward God had in store for Ruth was that she would be able to stop worshipping false gods and to follow Him only. Booz took pity on a poor woman from a distant country, loved her, and taught her how to worship the one true God.

Booz married Ruth even though she was poor, because she was so good and virtuous, and in a few years God blessed them by sending them a son who they named Obed. Obed became the grandfather of David, from whose family Christ was born.

THE BOY SAMUEL

Long, long ago, there lived a faithful woman named Anna. God had never sent her any children to love and care for. But Anna was faithful, and so one day when she was praying in the temple, she asked God to send her a baby boy. She promised the Lord that if her prayers were answered, she would give her son back to Him for every day of his life.

God did answer Anna's prayer, and sent her a little boy who she named Samuel, which means "asked of God." When Samuel was three years old, his mother took him to the temple as she had promised, and gave him to the High Priest Heli to raise and teach him.

One night as Samuel was sleeping in his room in the temple, he heard a voice calling him. He thought that it was Heli who had called him, and answered, "Here I am!" He ran to Heli, but the High Priest said: "I did not call you, my son. Go back to sleep." But Samuel heard the voice three more times, and each time he got up and ran to Heli again.

After that, the High Priest knew that it was the Lord who had called Samuel. He told him, "Go lie down, and if He calls you again, say: 'Speak, Lord, your servant hears you!'"

So Samuel went to bed again, and when the voice called for the fifth time, he said what the Priest had told him. The Lord then talked to him and told him that He was going to punish Heli and his sons, because the sons had grown to be very evil, and Heli had not stopped them.

The morning after the Lord had spoken to Samuel, Heli called the child to him and asked him what he had heard. At first, Samuel was afraid to tell, but Heli told him he must, so finally Samuel told him everything. The Lord's words came true: later on, Heli's sons were killed in a battle, and Heli himself fell backwards from a chair and died.

When Samuel grew up to be a man, he became a judge over Israel. He ruled wisely and well for many years.

THE STORY OF DAVID

There lived in the town of Bethlehem a shepherd boy named David, who carried a harp, and sometimes he would play it while singing to his dear little sheep.

One day Samuel came to the village as God had told him. When he saw David, he told him he would someday be king.

The king, named Saul, was so sad that his friends asked David to come and cure King Saul with his music. The music David sang touched the king's heart and made him feel better.

There was a terrible giant named Goliath who was so big and strong that King Saul's soldiers were afraid to go and fight him. However, David told the king that he would fight against the giant. The king was very surprised to hear David say this, but David knew that if he put all his trust in God, then he would surely win. So David took his shepherd's staff, his sling, and a few smooth stones, and he started out to battle Goliath.

When the giant saw the boy coming toward him, he rushed at David, but the boy quickly put a stone in his sling and struck Goliath in the forehead. The giant fell face-down on the ground and died. Then David ran up and took the giant's sword, and he cut off his head. Young David was treated like a hero.

When David grew up to manhood, God made him King of the Israelites. One of the first things he did was to bring the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. David had the Ark brought to the city in a beautiful parade, surrounded by priests and people singing hymns of praise to the Lord.

David wanted to build a great temple in which to keep the Ark. God, however, promised that David's son, Solomon, would be the one to build the temple.

KING SOLOMON

When King David got very old and thought that he was going to die soon, he asked his favorite son, Solomon, to come and see him. He declared that Solomon would be the next king. He also gave him good advice, telling him to always be faithful to the true God and never to forsake Him.

For many years, Solomon was obedient to his father's voice and all things went well for him. God was so pleased with the young king that he appeared one night in one of Solomon's dreams and said: "Tell me what you want that you would like me to give you!" Now remember, children, that even though Solomon was a king he was still very young. He thought it was a very hard job to rule over so many thousands of people, so he asked God to give him wisdom. God was so pleased with Solomon's answer that not only did He give the young king wisdom, but He also gave him money and fame.

One day two women with a little baby came to Solomon. These two women lived in the same house and each had had a baby of about the same age. But one night one of the babies died. The mother of the dead child was very upset, so she lied and said that the living baby belonged to her. Of course, the true mother also said it was hers. So to settle the matter, the two women came with the live baby to King Solomon.

Solomon listened to what each woman had to say. Then he ordered one of his servants to take a sword and cut the child in half and give one part to each woman. The mother of the live child said, "Please, I beg you, my king, give her the child alive and do not kill it." But the other woman said, "Yes, let neither of us have the child. Kill it!"

The king answered, pointing to the woman who wished to spare the life of the little one. "Give the child and do not kill it, for she is the child's real mother," he said. Solomon knew that the real mother would gladly give her child away, rather than have it cut in half and killed.

SOLOMON BUILDS THE GREAT TEMPLE

Of course, Solomon was so wise and famous that he had many visitors. One of these was the queen of Sheba, who came from far away in Arabia. She had heard many wonderful things about Solomon, and came to see them for herself. Solomon was very kind to her and answered all of her questions, even though some of them were very hard. The queen was astonished and praised Solomon for his goodness and wisdom. Before leaving for home she gave him gold and precious stones, and Solomon gave her many gifts in return.

The good king followed the advice of David and built a beautiful temple in which to worship God. Expensive wood and stones were brought in from far-away lands. The Holy of Holies, which was to hold the Ark of the Covenant, was covered with pure gold.

After seven years, the temple was finished. Thousands of people watched as Solomon offered prayers and made sacrifices to the Lord in the new Temple of Jerusalem.

Then the Lord appeared to Solomon and promised that if the king was faithful to Him, He would place his throne in the kingdom forever. But if Solomon and his people turned away from God and began to worship idols, the temple would be destroyed and the kingdom would be given to someone else.

For many years Solomon was a good king. But eventually he turned away from the true God and he and his people began to worship false gods instead. God then appeared to Solomon and told him that since he had sinned, his kingdom would be divided and given to one of his servants. And that was exactly what happened: when Solomon died, one of his servants (whose name was Jeroboam) became the next ruler.

The last years of Solomon's life were unhappy. While he had been faithful to God, there was peace. But from the moment he turned away from the true God, his glory and wisdom disappeared, and he became a sad, sorrowful man.

Wealth and power had made Solomon proud. By being around those who did not have true faith, his love for God shrank and shrank.

ROBOAM AND JEROBOAM

After Solomon's death, his son Roboam became king. But Roboam was an evil man and treated the people so cruelly that many of them rebelled and chose one of Solomon's servants, Jeroboam, to be their king instead.

From that day forward, the people of Israel were divided into two kingdoms: Judea and Israel. If Roboam had been more kind, his people would have loved him and would not have wanted a different king. From his mistake, dear children, learn to be less selfish, more ready to compromise with others, and to always be gentle to your friends. God loves the peaceful, and he loves the peacemakers even more.

Jerusalem was still the biggest city of Judea, so Jeroboam was afraid that his people would leave and go to Jerusalem to worship and sacrifice. To give them a reason to stay, he put up golden statues for the people to worship. Once again the people were turned to false worship. Only misery and sin could follow.

All of this sin hurt our Lord very much, so He sent holy men that were called prophets to lead the people back tothe one true faith. You will read about some of these prophets in the next story.

THE PROPHET ELIJAH

There lived an evil king in Israel named Ahab who didn't fear God or love Him. At the same time, there was a good and holy man named Elijah. God sent Elijah to Ahab to warn him that unless he and his people stopped worshipping the false god Baal, they would be punished. Ahab, however, would not listen to the Elijah's warning. To punish him, God didn't send any rain to the earth for three long years.

God told Elijah to go out into the wilderness and hide near a stream so that the evil Ahab would not find him. Ahab believed that it was Elijah who had caused the drought.

There was no food in the wilderness, and Elijah would have soon died of hunger if God was not taking care of him. God sent a raven every night and another one every morning to bring bread and meat to His faithful servant.

Then the stream dried up, so God told Elijah to go to a village where he would find a poor widow who would take care of him until the famine was over. He met a woman gathering sticks, and he asked for her food and water. The woman answered that she had only a small pot of grain and a pitcher of oil that she was about to make into a loaf for her and her son, and after that they would surely die of hunger.

Elijah told her to make two loaves, one for him and the other for herself and her son, and he promised her that the pot of grain would never be empty and the little pitcher of oil would never run out until the rain came. The woman believed him and went back to the house to make two loaves. Then, a wonderful thing happened! The widow looked at the pot of grain and it was as full as it was before, and the pitcher was full of oil to the brim! She begged Elijah to come and live in her house. He did so, and from that day there was plenty to eat.

In the middle of all this happiness, a very sad thing happened. The little boy became sick and died, and the poor mother's heart was broken. But Elijah prayed to God, and God brought the child back to life.

ELISHA SUCCEEDS ELIJAH

At last, God told Elijah to go to King Ahab and ask him to bring his false priests and people to Mt. Carmel. There, He would show them who was the true and only God.

The people came and Elijah ordered the priests of the false god Baal to bring two bulls and build two altars. He told them to put one bull on one altar and pray to Baal to send down fire from Heaven. The false god's priests prayed and prayed, but their prayers were not answered, and nothing happened. Then Elijah put the second bull on the second altar, and he prayed to the true God to send down fire from Heaven. God heard this prayer, and like a flash of lighting a streak of flame came down and burned not only the bull, but even the entire altar itself.

When the people saw this, they knew that the God of Elijah was the true God. They became afraid and were very sorry that they had sinned, so God forgave them and told Elijah that He would send down the rain that was needed so much. Very soon a dark cloud appeared in the sky and the rain fell in torrents.

Elijah was now growing very old, so God told him to find a worthy man named Elisha and make him a prophet in his place for when God decided to take Elijah to Heaven. Elijah found Elisha ploughing a field. He walked up to him and threw his cloak over him. Right away, Elisha knew that he had to follow the Lord. He said goodbye to his father and mother and he went with Elijah.

They came to the River Jordan. Since they had no boat, Elijah took off his cloak and struck the water. Where he struck, the water parted and made a path for them to cross to the other side.

Elijah then told Elisha that he was about to leave the earth. As they were talking, a chariot of fire pulled by fiery horses came between them, and Elijah was carried away by a great wind to Heaven. As he went, his cloak fell off of him and landed on the shoulders of Elisha, and with the cloak he received the power of performing miracles which God had given to Elijah.

THE STORY OF TOBIAS

In the city of Ninevah, there lived a good man, Tobias, who lived with his wife and only son, who was also named Tobias. One day, while he was sleeping, some dirt fell onto his eyes and made him blind.

A few years went by, and Tobias thought that soon he would die. So he called his son to go to the distant city of Rages to collect money that he had lent years ago to a man.

The young Tobias asked a young man, who was actually an angel of God, to go with him on his trip. Tobias and the man set out on their journey. When night came, they reached the Tigris River. Tobias was washing his feet in the water when a giant fish swam up to eat him. The angel told him to grab the fish by the gills, and pull it out. Tobias dragged the fish onto dry land. Then the angel told him to keep some of the fish to use later.

After a few days, they came to a city where a friend of Tobias' family had a beautiful daughter named Sarah. Sarah was very sad because she had gotten married seven different times to seven different husbands, but each time, her husband was killed by an angry devil on the night of the wedding. The angel told Tobias he should ask Sarah to marry him. Tobias was afraid to die like all the other husbands, but the angel told him that those men had not loved God. If Tobias married Sarah and if they both prayed, the devil would not be able to hurt him. So Tobias and Sarah were married, and did what the angel had said. Because of his faith in God, the devil could not harm Tobias.

After the angel collected the elder Tobias' money, the son Tobias hurried home to his dear father and mother. Tobias took the parts of fish which he had kept so carefully and rubbed it on the eyes of his father, and suddenly he could see again.

After that the young man told them that he was the angel Raphael, one of the seven great angels who stand before the throne of God.

JUDITH THE BRAVE WOMAN

Once, there lived a great king who was so powerful that his army conquered almost every city it attacked. In the land of Israel, there was a town called Bethulia. Of course, the great king wanted to conquer it as well, so he sent his general, Holofernes, to attack it.

Holofernes was a smart man, and so he ordered his men to block up the stream that supplied water to the city so that it would flow in a different direction. He knew that when the people in the city found themselves with no water to drink, it would not take them long to surrender.

The Isrealites in the city prayed hard for help from God and said that if no help came in a few days they would open the gates of the city and let the enemy in.

In the city there lived a rich and beautiful woman named Judith. When she heard that the people had dared to set a time limit for God, she became very angry. She told them to pray even harder, and that she herself would pray and do penance.

At the end of a few days, Judith dressed in her most beautiful and expensive gown, covered in gold and precious stones. She had a plan to save her people. Judith went with her maid to the tent of great general. Holofernes was so charmed by her beauty, that even though she was a Jew, he allowed her to walk around the camp.

One night as Holofernes and his guards were asleep, Judith slipped into his tent. She took the general's sword and cut off his head, and then she put it in a bag and returned to the city.

Her people were so happy when they heard how brave Judith had been. They got up their courage and left the city to attack the enemy. When the soldiers found out that their general was dead, they all ran away, leaving behind their gold and other riches. The Isrealites kept the treasure and shared it among themselves. The people and the priests honored Judith. They praised her not only for her bravery, but for the humility of her heart.

QUEEN ESTHER

Many, many years ago in a far-away country called Persia, there lived a rich and powerful king named Assuerus. One of those Israelites was a sweet and modest girl named Esther. Esther had no father and mother, but was taken care of by her uncle, who was a good and faithful man named Mordechai. Well one day, the king saw Esther. He was so pleased with her beauty and modesty that he made her his queen, though he did not know that she was an Israelite.

Now, in the same kingdom, there was an evil man named Aman. He was the king's chief advisor, and he was very jealous of Mordechai and wanted to kill him. Aman knew that Mordechai was a Hebrew, but he did not know that Mordechai was also the queen's uncle. So he persuaded the king to order his men to kill all of the Hebrews: men, women, and children.

Mordechai told Queen Esther about Aman's plan and asked her to beg the king to spare her people. The good, faithful Esther fasted and prayed for help, and then she went to the king. When Assuerus saw his beautiful wife standing before him with tears in her eyes, he asked her kindly what she wanted.

Esther replied that she wanted the king and Aman to come to a feast that she would prepare for the next day. The king promised to come, and so Esther went away happy.

Soon afterwards, the king's servants came to take Aman to the feast that Esther had prepared. During the feast, the king asked Esther to tell him anything that she wanted him to give her, and that even if it were half of his kingdom, he would give it to her.

Esther answered Assuerus by telling him about Aman's evil plan, and begged him to spare her life and the lives of the other Jews. Assuerus was very angry with Aman for coming up with such a horrible plan, and ordered him to be killed. After that, the king was very kind to Esther and her people. Not only were their lives spared, but they lived in peace and quiet. They were protected by the good Mordechai, to whom the king had given a very high position.

THE SEVEN MACHABEES

Long, long ago, there lived a very evil king named Antiochus who treated the Isrealites very cruelly. One time, he wanted them to eat a kind of meat that the Hebrew law said they could not eat. When they would not do what he wanted, he got very angry.

One of the Isrealites was a very faithful widow who had seven sons, good and holy just like she was. They were called the Seven Machabees.

When the king ordered them to eat the forbidden meat and they refused, he became furious. He had the oldest son brought to him, and he made his servants torture him. Then he ordered the young man to be burned alive in front of his mother and brothers.

One after another the sons were tortured and killed, until at last only the youngest son and his mother were still alive.

The evil king could not help but admire the firm faith of the good young men. He went to the youngest son and promised to not only spare his life, but to make him rich and famous if he would eat the forbidden meat. But the boy refused. The king went to his mother next. He thought her love for her last child would make her weak, so he asked her to persuade her son to give in and eat the meat so he could live.

The mother went to talk to her son, but even though she had already seen six of her beloved children die, she did not do what the king ordered her to do. She told her last son to be brave and to keep his faith. Again, he refused to eat the meat. So the king had him killed, just like his brothers.

Now, only the mother remained. The king was so angry that he ordered her to be killed just like her children. So the brave mother, a martyr herself and the mother of seven martyrs, was put to death. But she went on to meet her saintly children in heaven.

DANIEL IN THE LION'S DEN

Many, many years ago, the king of Persia destroyed the city of Jerusalem and made the Isrealites who lived there come to his own country, where false gods were worshipped.

One of these Isrealites was a very beautiful and faithful boy named Daniel. The king liked him so much that he brought him up in his own palace. The older Daniel grew the wiser he became, and soon the people of the whole country had heard of him.

And what do you suppose, dear children, kept him so good and wise? Well, he always prayed to the one true God, and he went among his own people comforting them and helping them in every way he could. He was kind to others, and so God took good care of Daniel.

Now, the people of Babylon had a false god called Bel. Daniel proved that it was a false god, and destroyed it. The Babylonians were very angry because of this, and they went to the king to demand that he give Daniel to them so they could punish him. The king loved Daniel very much and did not want to do it, but eventually he had to give the people what they asked for. They threw Daniel into a den that was full of seven hungry lions. But because of God's Almighty power, Daniel remained unharmed.

At last the king came to the den, expecting to find his dear young friend dead. But, to his surprise, Daniel was alive and well. The king happily set him free, and said: "You are great, O Lord, the God of Daniel!" Then he gave Daniel a very high place in his kingdom, and Daniel lived to be an old, old man, blessed by God for his holiness and his goodness.

THE PROPHET JONAH

Another great prophet was called Jonah. He was chosen by God to go to the rich city of Ninevah and tell the evil people there that unless they did penance for their sins, God would punish them. Now, these people did not like the Israelites. Because Jonah was a Israelite, he was afraid that they would not believe him. He was even afraid that they would kill him. So he disobeyed God, and went in the opposite direction, sailing away on board a large ship.

Shortly after the ship left the shore, a big storm came up. Jonah realized that it was him God was angry at. He told the sailors how he had disobeyed God, and then he asked them to throw him overboard. They did, and right away the sea became calm.

After the sailors threw him overboard, a big whale came up and swallowed Jonah alive. For three days he was in the stomach of the whale, but God kept him alive. At the end of that time, the whale spit Jonah out on dry land. He fell on his knees and thanked God for sparing his life. Then Jonah did as God commanded, and went to the city of Ninevah to give the people God's message. The King and his people were very sorry for all of their sins, and they begged for God's forgiveness. The Heavenly Father heard their prayer for mercy, and His kind heart was moved to spare their city.

Instead of being happy about this, Jonah was very angry. Because God had not put on a show like raining fire down upon the city he thought that the people would say that he was a false prophet. He did not think of the innocent children and other poor creatures who would die if God destroyed the city.

Jonah went out of the city into a desert where he wished he were dead. But God did not let Jonah die. He made a tree grow to give Jonah shelter from the sun. But then, the next day, He made the tree wither away, and once more Jonah suffered from the heat and complained again. God then told Jonah how awful it was that he grieved over the loss of a mere plant, but he was willing to let the whole city of Ninevah be destroyed rather than being called a false prophet.

JUDAS MACHABEUS

In one of the other stories, you read about how many years ago, the Isrealites were captured by their enemies and were treated cruelly by an evil king for a long time.

Well, after this had gone on for years and years, finally a very brave man named Judas Machabeus decided to wage war against the evil king so that the Isrealites could be free again.

Judas Machabeus was a good man and he believed in the one true God. So the first thing he did was to destroy all of the false gods and idols that the people had been worshipping. Finally the Temple of Jerusalem was purified from the stain of false worship. The holiday of Hanukkah, which is still celebrated by Hebrew people right around the time that we celebrate Christmas, is for remembering how the Isrealites were able to worship God again.

Eventually, Judas Machabeus had taken over the whole country of Israel for the Hebrew people again. The evil king ruled no longer. By the time he finished his conquest, it was a very exciting time for the Hebrew people. It was almost time for the Baby Jesus to be born!

Jesus was going to come down to earth because He loved you and your family and friends and everyone else in the whole world so much. He was going to come and suffer and die on the Cross so that we could all go to Heaven. To return Jesus' love, you can pray to Him very often. You can do good deeds and be kind to others. And you can love Jesus and everyone else around you very, very much.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Bible has many writers who are all inspired by God, the author. When we read the Bible, we read the words God gives us. We read what He wants us to know and to hear and to live.

The New Testament tells the story of Jesus. The first four books, the Gospels, tell the story of the Birth of Jesus, His life, His teachings, His death, His Resurrection and His Ascension into Heaven.

The other twenty-three books of the New Testament tell us how Jesus' apostles went out and continued His mission to teach and to preach about love. They spread the Good News of the Gospel all over the world. They wrote letters to help one another and us to keep spreading the love of Jesus.

God's words are meant to be shared. As we read the stories, we can learn the message and better tell others about God's love for us all.

THE COMING OF JESUS

God had told Adam and Eve that He was going to send a Savior who would show the people how to be good and happy again and open up the gates of Heaven.

A young woman, whose name was Mary, lived in a peaceful little village called Nazareth. One day while she was praying, a soft light filled the room. Then the angel Gabriel appeared in front of Mary and said, "Hello Mary, faithful Mary, the Lord is with you. You are blessed among women." As Mary stared at the angel in amazement, he told her that she was going to be the Mother of a Child Who she should name Jesus.

Then the angel went to Joseph, who was engaged to be married to Mary. The angel told him that he was going to be the foster-father of Jesus.

Not long after, the emperor of Rome decided that he wanted to know how many people lived in his empire. So he ordered every person to go to the city that their family was from and to write down their name in a large book. Even though Mary and Joseph lived in Nazareth, they were descended from the family of King David. Bethlehem. This meant that Bethlehem was the city of David, so Mary and Joseph had to travel to Bethlehem to write their names in the large book.

There were many other people who also had to go to Bethlehem also. Soon Bethlehem was full of people, and when Mary and Joseph got there, there was nowhere for them to stay. But at last somebody told them about a stable where they could stay for the night. It was dirty and full of animals, but Joseph and Mary were so tired for their long journey that they were happy to go there to rest.

It was in this stable that the Baby Jesus was finally born. He did not even have a bed to lie in. His Blessed Mother wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger, the only cradle she had for her dear Baby.

So the little town of Bethlehem slept through the first Christmas night. The people did not even know that their Savior had been born!

THE CALL OF THE SHEPHERDS

Below the town of Bethlehem, there was a wide field. It was the same field that you read about in the story of David, where David would bring his little sheep to eat the grass and play. Just like David many years ago, when Jesus was born there were shepherds who were in the fields, watching their sheep.

It was night time, and the shepherds were all gathered around their campfire. Suddenly, a bright, bright light blazed in the night sky, even brighter than the sun is during the daytime. The shepherds were very afraid, but then an angel appeared. The angel said, "Don't be afraid, because I am here to bring you wonderful news! Today in Bethlehem, the city of David, a Savior has been born: Christ the Lord! Go there, and you will find Him wrapped in swaddling clothes and laying in a manger."

After the angel had finished speaking, the starry skies opened up. Many more angels appeared, all playing beautiful music on their flutes and harps and singing hymns in wonderful voices. "Glory to God in the highest," they sang, "and good will to people on earth."

Finally, the music got quieter and quieter, and the angels flew away back to Heaven. The shepherds put on their cloaks and picked up their tiniest lambs in their arms. They said, "Let's go to Bethlehem to see the Savior that the angels told us about!" They ran up the hillside all the way to the city.

Finally they arrived at the stable where the angles had told them to look, and there they found Mary and Joseph and the newborn Baby Jesus.

The shepherds got down on their knees and worshipped the newborn Savior. Since they were poor shepherds, they only had their little lambs to give to the Baby Jesus as gifts. But when they looked into the Baby's eyes, they realized that the only thing He truly wanted from them was their love and that is what He wants from us, too.

The Infant Savior, the Prince of Peace, had come to the world at last. He came in the shape of a helpless little baby to teach us to always be humble in the eyes of God.

THE THREE WISE MEN

A long way away from Bethlehem, there lived three wise men. One night, they were studying the stars in the sky. Suddenly, a new star appeared that none of them had ever seen before! It was the brightest and shiniest star in the sky. The wise men knew that the new star meant that something wonderful had happened: Christ the Lord had come to the world at last.

The three wise men left at once to search for the new-born King. They rode fine camels and carried many wonderful, expensive gifts. They traveled for a very, very long time, over sandy deserts and rocky mountains. Finally, they got to the city of Jerusalem. When they got there, they asked the Hebrews where they should go to find the house of the newborn King.

The wise men explained to the Isrealites about the shiny new star that they had seen, and how it meant that a new King had been born.

King Herod was not so glad when he heard the wise men's news. He did not know that the newborn King was the King of Heaven, not a king of the earth. He was afraid that the Baby Jesus would grow up and steal his throne. So he told the three wise men to come back and tell him where He was. Herod told the wise men that he wanted to know where to find the new King so he could give Him gifts and worship Him too, but secretly he planned to kill the Baby Jesus once he had found him.

So the wise men left Jerusalem and continued to follow the bright, new star. They followed the star all the way to Bethlehem, where it was shining over the little manger where the Baby Jesus lay. The wise men went inside and fell to their knees in front of the little Baby Jesus. They worshipped Him and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. In return, they were given the gift of Faith. That night, when they went to sleep, and angel came to the wise men and told them about King Herod's evil plan to kill the Baby Jesus. So the next morning when it was time for them to go back home, the wise men went a different way so Herod could not see them.

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

Soon after the wise men left, God sent an angel to Joseph in one of his dreams. The angel told him that the soon evil King Herod would send soldiers to kill Jesus. The angel told Him to take Jesus and His Mother and run away to Egypt.

Joseph obeyed the angel right away. The Holy Family left in the middle of the night to travel to a strange country. On the way, they were cold and hungry and thirsty. They were in danger of robbers and wild animals, but they did not complain and they were not afraid. They had the love of Jesus to help them find their way.

When the wise men did not return to King Herod to tell him were Jesus was, Herod became very angry. So he sent his soldiers to kill every single baby boy who was younger than two years older. The cruel soldiers spared no one. They dragged innocent babies from their mothers' arms and put them to death. They even killed them while they slept in their cradles. Their mothers cried and cried for them. These poor innocent children all died for Christ, because King Herod tried to reach Him by putting them all to death. These blessed babies were all martyrs for their Infant King!

In the meantime, the Holy Family settled in Egypt. They lived there for a long time. Joseph worked as a carpenter to support the Infant Savior and His Blessed Mother. There were other Hebrews in that strange land of Egypt, but they didn't have a temple to pray in. This made the faithful Mary and Joseph very sad, but even though there was no temple, they had the Baby Jesus with them, and that was like having a little bit of Heaven with them on earth.

Years later, the angel returned to tell Joseph that the evil King Herod had finally died. The angel told Joseph that it was now safe for the Holy Family to go back to Israel. So Jesus, Mary, and Joseph went back to live in Nazareth, the place in Israel where Mary and Joseph had lived before Jesus was born.

JESUS IN THE TEMPLE AND HIS YOUTH

In the beautiful land of Nazareth, the tiny Baby Jesus grew into a strong and beautiful Boy. When He was twelve years old, Mary and Joseph took Him with them to celebrate Passover in the Temple of Jerusalem. The Passover was a great holiday that was celebrated ever year in memory of how the Hebrews had escaped slavery in Egypt long ago. All of the Jewish men went to the festival, just like you go to Mass on Sundays and on holidays.

For a whole week, Jesus and His parents stayed in Jerusalem. They went to the temple and prayed, listening to all of the religious lessons taught by the priests. Finally, the Passover celebration ended. Mary and Joseph prepared to return home. But Jesus was nowhere to be found!

For three days and three nights, Mary and Joseph looked everywhere for Jesus. They searched all around the city, but they could not find Him anywhere. Mary was so, so sad about the loss of her beloved Son.

At last, after they had not been able to find Him for so long, Mary and Joseph decided to go back to the Temple of Jerusalem to pray to God to help them find Jesus.

He was sitting with the wise men and priests of the temple. He asked them many questions and even answered their questions too, and He spoke with more wisdom than it was normal for a boy to have. The faces of the wise men were full of surprise at how smart and faithful this young Boy was!

The Blessed Mother Mary's sadness turned into joy when she found her dear Child again. She went up to him and asked him, "Son, why did you do this to us without telling us where you were going? We thought we had lost you, and we were very sad." Jesus answered, "Why did you think you had lost me? Didn't you know that I would be here, in My Father's house?" Then Jesus held His Mother's hand, and they left the Temple of Jerusalem and returned to Nazareth.

JOHN THE BAPTIST AND THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

The blessed Virgin Mary had a cousin named Elizabeth. Elizabeth had a son named John who was only six months older than Jesus.

When John grew up, he went to live in the desert for a long time. He wore a coat made of camel hair, and the only thing he ate was dried insects called locusts and honey that he took from the beehives of wild bees. John lived such a hard life to prepare for the coming of our dear Lord as the Savior of mankind.

One day, God told John to leave the desert and go to the Jordan River. So John went there. He preached to the people and tried to make them sorry for their sins. He told them that the Kingdom of God was at hand.

Many people who heard what John said went to him to confess their sins. He would baptize them in the waters of the Jordan River. That is why he was given the name John the Baptist. He told the people that he was baptizing them with water, but the Savior would baptize them with the Holy Spirit. Some of the people began to believe that John the Baptist was Christ, but he explained to them that he was only a servant preparing the way for his Master, Jesus.

Finally, it was time for Jesus to reveal Himself to all of the people as the Redeemer of the world. He left His Blessed Mother and His home of Nazareth. He went to the Jordan River to be baptized by John the Baptist.

When John saw Jesus, he knew that He was the Savior. He also knew that Jesus had no sins to wash away, because Jesus was the innocent Son of God and was pure and clean. But our dear Lord told John to baptize Him anyway to show the people that even though He was the Son of God, He was humble enough to be cleansed with sinners.

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

Before Jesus went on to continue His mission of spreading the Word of God, He went to stay in a wild desert for forty days and forty nights so he could be by himself to pray and think about God. During the whole time he was there, he didn't eat anything at all. So after the forty days and nights were over, he was very, very hungry.

Now, you remember how Satan tempted Eve to disobey God and caused the first sin. Satan saw that Jesus had come to save people from the first sin, and he was determined to stop him. So he decided to go to Jesus and try to tempt him to sin, just like he tempted Eve.

He went to Jesus in the desert, and he saw that Jesus was very hungry. So he said, "If You are the Son of God, tell these stones to turn into bread." But Jesus did not do as the devil told him. He answered, "People need more than bread to live. They also need the Word of God."

Satan tried to tempt Jesus again. He picked Him up and carried Him all the way to the very tallest tower of the Temple of Jerusalem, and he said, "If You are the Son ofGod, jump down. It is said that God has ordered His angels to take care of you, and that if you fall they will swoop down and catch you so you will not die." But again, Jesus refused to do as the devil told Him. He answered, "It is also said that it is a sin to test God."

Satan tried to tempt Jesus one last time. He took Him to the top of a very big mountain. It was so tall that Jesus could see every country in the whole world when He stood on top of it. The devil pointed to all of the countries and said, "I will make You the king of all of these countries if You will get down on Your knees and worship me." When He heard this, Jesus became very angry. He turned to the devil and said, "Go away, Satan. I love God, and I know it is a sin to worship anyone except for Him."

When he heard that, Satan knew that he had failed to tempt Jesus, and he left disappointed. Once he had gone, God sent angels down to take care of Jesus and give him food to eat.

JESUS CALLS THE APOSTLES

Jesus already knew that He would not live for many years on earth. So He decided to choose some followers, who He called disciples, to come with Him and learn from Him. He would teach them all the things He knew about God and the way to Heaven. That way, when He returned to His Heavenly Father, they could stay behind and teach the people after He left.

When Jesus went to the Jordan River to be baptized by John the Baptist, John the Baptist told everyone just Who Jesus was. He shouted to the people all around him in the same words that the priest says at Mass before giving the Holy Communion: "Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him Who takes away the sins of the world!"

Two of the men who were with John the Baptist decided to go and follow Jesus when they heard this. The two men were John the beloved disciple and Andrew, who was the brother of Peter.

One by one, Jesus gathered His disciples around Him. He had many disciples, but He chose only twelve of them to be His Apostles. One of the Apostles was Peter, whose name meant "the rock." Jesus chose Peter to be in charge of the Apostles and to be the head of His church on earth.

THE FIRST MIRACLE OF JESUS

Just a few days after Jesus gathered His very first disciples, he traveled with them to a sunny little village. The village's name was Cana. It was in the land of Galilee, which was not very far away from Nazareth.

In this little village of Cana, some of the Blessed Mother's friends were getting married. She was in Cana to go to their wedding. When Jesus and his disciples got to Cana, she invited them to come to the wedding too, so they did.

Now, in those days, the people liked to drink wine when they were eating, especially at big, important parties like weddings. But the couple who were having the wedding had not bought enough wine for everyone to drink! Soon the wine ran out. The couple were so, so embarrassed. They felt that they must be terrible hosts, and they became sad on what was supposed to be their special day.

The Blessed Mother Mary saw how embarrassed and unhappy they were, and he tender heart filled with sadness for them. So she went to her Son Jesus and whispered, "They have no wine." Now remember, Jesus always, always did everything that His Blessed Mother asked him to do. So He said not to worry, and the Blessed Mother told the servants to do as Jesus said. Jesus told the servants to fill up six very big jars with water. Then he told the servants, "Take out the wine and carry it to the head waiter."

The servants were confused, because they had filled the jars up with water. But when they brought the jars to the head waiter, they were surprised to find that when they opened them, they were filled up with wine!

Turning the water into wine was the first miracle that Jesus performed in public. It made his disciples have even more faith in him than ever. The people who saw it told everyone about the power of the Savior, and Jesus began to become very famous.

THE BUYERS AND SELLERS IN THE TEMPLE

After the miracle at the wedding at Cana, Jesus went to Capharnaum, His favorite town. In those days it was a large and busy city on the shores of the beautiful Lake of Galilee. Its coast was lined with fishing boats and goods and nets drying by the water side.

These few days spent at Capharnaum were the last days Jesus spent living in the same house as His Blessed Mother. From this time on, our dear Lord had no place He could call home.

He went around from village to village, performing miracles and preaching to many people, telling them to repent their sins.

The Jewish Passover was drawing near, so Jesus and His disciples went up to Jerusalem for the feast. When Jesus entered the temple. He saw people selling oxen, sheep, and doves to be used as a sacrifice. There were also greedy money-changers, or bankers.

Jesus was very angry when He saw and heard all the noise and commotion. It was so loud and busy in the temple, it was impossible for anyone to pray. So He made a whip out of many small ropes, and he drove all of the buyers and sellers out of the temple. He knocked over the money tables and said, "Take away these things and stop making my Father's house into a marketplace!"

The Hebrews were angry that Jesus would dare to act like that, and they asked him why he had made the buyers and the sellers leave the temple, and why he thought he could order them around. Jesus just said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will rebuild it."

This made the Hebrews even angrier, because they thought Jesus was talking about their beautiful Temple of Jerusalem that they had spent so many years building. But really, Jesus was talking about His own Sacred Body, which would lay in the tomb for three days before rising again from the dead.

JESUS' MIRACLE WITH THE FISHERMAN

One day as Jesus came to the shores of the Sea of Galilee, He saw two fishing boats anchored. Nearby, two men were washing their fishing nets. Jesus stepped into one of the boats, which belonged to Peter. He told him to push the boat out a little way from the shore. That way, it would be much easier for our Lord to be heard by all of the people who had come to listen to Him. He spoke to them in plain, simple words so that everyone could understand the things that He told them.

After the sermon was over, Jesus told Peter to sail out into the water and let down his nets to catch some fish. Peter answered, "Master, I fished all night long, and I didn't catch anything. But because you say so, I will try again." So Peter let down his nets, and right away the nets became so full of fish that they nearly ripped open. Peter had to call James and John to come and help him, and soon their boats were also full of fish.

When these poor, simple fisherman saw the miracle that Jesus had performed, they were amazed and terrified. Peter fell down and Jesus's feet and said, "Leave me, O Lord, because I am a sinful man." But Jesus told him not to be afraid, and that he and the other fisherman should come with him and become His disciples to help Him teach men to love God.

The fishermen obeyed God's command. They left everything behind to follow Jesus. They did not even stop to tell anyone goodbye. They obeyed at the first call, giving up their homes, relatives, and friends. This is how our Lord gathered together the first of His group of Apostles. They followed Jesus because of His words, and they helped him to do His work. Their job was to go out into the world and preach His word, and to lead people to the love of God.

THE CURE OF THE PARALYTIC

Sometimes when Jesus went back to the town Capharnaum after preaching in Galilee, He went to the homes of the poor to eat with them.

Jesus was sitting in a house like this with the little family he was visiting, when suddenly a large crowd gathered around Him. They brought many, many poor people and sick people. So our Lord talked to them about the Kingdom of Heaven, and how it would be their home for eternity if they kept themselves from sin.

In the crowd of people that came to listen to the Savior's words was a man who had been paralyzed for many years. He was a very faithful man, and he knew that if he could get close to Jesus, then Jesus would cure him and make him be able to walk again. His friends carried him on a mattress and tried and tried to reach Jesus' side. But it was too crowded, and they could not get through.

He told his friends to carry him outside and up the stairs onto the roof. Then his friends carefully removed the tiles from over the room where Jesus was sitting. They made a large hole in the roof, and the lowered their friend on his mattress through it until he was resting at our Lord's feet.

Jesus looked long and lovingly at the man. His calm, clear gaze could see into his soul. The man suddenly remembered all of his sins, and he looked away, full of shame. But Jesus said, "Don't be sad, son. Your sins are forgiven."

When He said this, the Pharisees became very angry. They accused Him of blasphemy. Jesus looked at them and asked, "What is it easier for me to say: your sins are forgiven? Or is it easier for me to say: get up and walk?" Then Jesus performed a miracle. He said, "I am doing this so that you can see that the Son of Man has the power to forgive sins." Then he turned to look at the paralyzed man, and He said, "Get up, pick up your mattress, and walk back to your house."

At Jesus' words, the man was cured! He happily got to his feet, picked up his bed, and left the house, perfectly healthy.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Once, as the disciples and many others gathered together on a mountainside to listen to Jesus, He gave them the most beautiful sermon that has ever been heard. It is called the Sermon on the Mount, or the teaching of the Eight Beatitudes.

First, Jesus said: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." The poor in spirit are humble because they know that they have sinned and that God alone can forgive them. He gives them real happiness by bringing them into His kingdom on this earth, which is only a small part of what they will enjoy forever in Heaven.

Second, Jesus said: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land." It is a wonderful thing when children are patient and do not become angry when others try to hurt them. They only have to think about how patiently Jesus suffered when evil people tried with all their might to hurt Him. He was meek and gentle always, a lamb of God who let himself be insulted because He loved us so much.

Third, Jesus said: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." Sometimes sad things happen to us in life. They can happen when we are young or they can happen when we are old, but sad things happen to everyone eventually. When sad things happen to us, we should turn to God and ask for His help, and He will never turn away from us.

Fourth, Jesus said: "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be filled." People who always do what is right in order to please God are very happy people indeed. If we remember this, then God will be so generous and kind to us. He will help us whenever we need Him, and in return we shall be so happy to know that we are pleasing Him!

Fifth, Jesus said: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Sometimes we have to show mercy and kindness to others. It is very easy to be kind to our friends, but if we are truly merciful, then we must also be kind to people who have harmed us. This is the mercy which God asks us to show. No one shows more mercy than God.

Sixth, Jesus said: "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God." God loves pure, innocent hearts. If we want to stay close to our dear Lord, then we must keep our souls pure and unstained. God chose the purest woman that was ever born to be His own dear Blessed Mother, and the pure St. John was the most beloved disciple. So keep your hearts as pure as on the day when you were baptized, and you will be like an angel on earth.

Seventh, Jesus said: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." There are times when fights happen between friends, and each one thinks he or she is in the right. These fights can lead to bitter, angry words. But sometimes if you speak to those who are fighting, an argument can be settled in just a few minutes. Try to become peacemakers, for by doing that, you will surely become the children of God.

Last, Jesus said: "Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice's sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." Sometimes people are cruel to us. They make fun of our religion and dislike us. When these things happen, we should take the teasing patiently. We should be glad to suffer for Jesus' sake, because that way, we become like Him. The reward for our suffering will be Heaven itself, where we will get to stay with God for all eternity.

After our Lord had finished saying the Beatitudes, He turned to His Apostles and told them that they were going to be the light of the world. Jesus meant that the disciples should show by example how to live and how to act. He taught them to be kind to others and to spread the gift of charity everywhere. He taught them to leave everything in the hands of God, to tell Him about their lives as they would a loving parent, and He said that in return He would care for them as His devoted children.

THE CENTURION'S SERVANT

In the city of Capharnaum, there lived a Roman centurion (a "centurion is the captain of one hundred soldiers). He did not believe in the one true God, but he was good and kind at heart. He was generous to the Jews and built them a synagogue, which he paid for with his own money. Because of this, the Jews liked him.

The centurion had a slave who had been so faithful in his service that the centurion loved him. One day when the slave became very sick, the centurion did all he could to make him better. This unbeliever had heard of Jesus, the great Wonder-Worker whose religion he did not know, and he decided to go to Him for help. He did not go himself at first. Instead, he sent some of the Jewish elders who were his friends to go and ask our Lord for help.

Jesus, of course, decided to help right away, and went to the centurion's house. When the centurion saw the loving, gentle Jesus coming, he ran to meet Him. He was afraid that his house was not worthy of such a holy guest, so he told Jesus: "Lord, I am not good enough for you to come under my roof, but if you say the word, then I know my servant will be healed." The Centurion's simple prayer pleased our Lord very much. He turned to those around Him and said: "Amen! I tell you, I have not found faith so great in all of Israel." Then He turned back to the centurion and told him: "Go back and see your servant. What you believed would happen has come true." And just as Jesus said, the servant was healed that very hour.

THE LOSS OF AN ONLY SON

One day, as Jesus and His Apostles were entering the gates of the city of Naim, they ran into a funeral. The funeral was making it's way towards the rocky caves outside the city, which were used for burial places.

First came men carrying the body of a dead boy. Walking behind them was the boy's poor, aged mother, bent over with sadness and pain. She was now alone in the world, for the boy had been the last of her loved ones. The widow had no close relatives to help her or comfort her. But nearby, she did have a friend -- for Jesus is the friend of us all.

Jesus saw the mother's grief, and His eyes filled with tears as His Sacred Heart was touched with pity. He stepped up to her and with a gentleness that is only found in Jesus's Voice, He said: "Woman, stop crying!" Then He went over to where the dead boy lay. He touched him and said in a loud voice so that everyone could hear Him: "Young man, get up!" Right away, the boy sat up, restored to life. How the poor widow's eyes shone as she saw her only child breathe once more!

Tenderly, the loving Savior picked up the boy and gently placed him in his mother's arms. With hearts overflowing with gladness, the mother and her son knelt at Jesus' Feet and thanked Him again and again for His loving kindness. Those who had seen the great miracle praised God, saying: "A great prophet has come among us! God has visited his people!"

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

This parable tells how a sower, or farmer, went out to plant his seeds. As the sower walked along, throwing his seeds to the left and right, they fell in many different places.

Some seeds fell by the side of the road, and many little birds quickly came along and ate them.

Some of the seeds fell on rough, stony ground that was covered in only a thin layer of dirt. The tiny roots made their way through the dirt until they came to the stone, and then there was no more room for them to grow so they withered away and died.

Some seeds fell in places where thorns and weeds were already growing. Thorns and weeds grow much more quickly than little seeds, and soon it got much too crowded for the seeds to grow at all.

Lastly, some of the seeds fell upon deep, rich dirt. The tiny roots pushed far into the earth, and soon healthy plants were growing, fresh and green. When the harvest came, the sower gathered these plants, and he harvested many times as much as he had planted.

When the seeds fell by the roadside, it is like when the Word of God is heard by people who do not bother to pay any attention to it. They forget about it quickly, just like the birds quickly ate up the seeds.

When the seeds fell on the rocky ground, it is like when the Word of God is heard by people who listen to it without letting it sink deep into their souls. They think they believe, but their faith is not firmly rooted.

When the seeds fell where the thorns and weeds were growing, it is like when the Word of God is heard by people with cold and selfish hearts. The weeds and thorns crowded out the little seeds so that they could not grow.

But when the seeds fell in the rich, deep soil, it is like when the Word of God is heard by people who listen and believe with their entire souls, these people grow and give back to God by living good lives, obeying His commandments, being kind to others, and above all, by loving God.

THE PARABLE OF THE WHEAT AND COCKLE

One day a farmer and his workers went out into the fields and planted wheat in the fields. But this farmer had a rival who did not like him. The rival wanted to ruin his harvest, so when night came he snuck into the farmer's wheat fields. He secretly planted many cockle seeds with the wheat seeds. Cockle is another kind of plant, but it is a very bad plant. It is a weed, and it is not good to eat.

When the plants all finally began to grow and they saw the weeds growing with the wheat, they were very surprised and upset.

The workers asked the farmer if they should go out in the fields and tear up the weeds by the roots. But the farmer knew that if the workers did that, then they would accidentally pull out the good wheat as well. So he told the workers to let both the weeds and the wheat plants grow until it was time for the harvest. Then, he would send the workers out to gather both the wheat and the weeds. The servants would put the good wheat in the farmer's barns, but they would take the weeds and burn them.

In this parable, you should think of the farmer as God and His workers as the angels. The farmer's rival is the devil. The large wheat field is a picture of the whole world. God scatters good things in the world, just like the farmer planted the wheat seeds. People who listen to the Word of God become like the good wheat, growing healthy and strong by obeying God and believing in Him. But the devil tries to plant bad thoughts in the world and in people's hearts, just like the farmer's rival planted the cockle seeds. The people who listen to the devil are like the weeds, doing what the devil wants instead of what God wants.

God allows both the good people and the bad people to live, just like the farmer let both the wheat and the weeds grow. But when the end of the world comes, the good people will be rewarded and the bad people will be punished.

THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED

One day, one of Jesus's followers asked Him, "Lord, what is the Kingdom of Heaven like?" And so Jesus told the Parable of the Mustard Seed.

The mustard seed is very, very small. It is smaller than any other seed, so smaller that you can barely see it with the naked eye. But even though the mustard seed is so very small, it grows very fast. It grows so fast, in fact, that it has already become a tall, strong plant when all of the other plants in the garden are still just little green shoots. And when it finally finishes growing up, the mustard plant is a big, big tree. Many singing birds build their nests in the tree, and tired travelers rest under its shady branches.

Jesus said that the mustard seed is like the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Our name for the Kingdom of Heaven on earth is our church: the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church was created by Christ and His Apostles, and it started out very, very small, like a little mustard seed. But then it grew and grew, and now there are Catholics everywhere in the world, like the many branches of a very big tree. We should be so grateful that we get to be sheltered by the wide branches of the Catholic Church, and that those branches will save our souls and show us the way to Heaven.

JESUS WALKS UPON THE WATER

When our Lord was praying on the mountain after sunset, He told His Apostles to go down to their boat and row back to the other side of the lake. The Apostles were very tired from all of the work they had done that day, but of course they did what Jesus told them.

After they had been rowing for a few hours, suddenly the sky became very dark. The wind began to blow, and very large waves began to toss the boat around like a toy. The Apostles were afraid that their boat would sink and they would all drown. They wished badly that Jesus was still with them. They did not know that Jesus was watching them from the shore.

Soon a light shined through the darkness, and a bright Figure appeared coming towards them over the water. The Apostles did not know that the Figure was Jesus, and they were afraid that they were seeing a ghost. But then the Figure spoke: "Be brave, My friends! Don't be afraid, it's only Me."

At the sound of Jesus' voice, all of the Apostles were amazed. Peter said, "Lord, if it is You, then tell me to walk to You over the water." Jesus answered, "Come."

Right away, Peter stepped over the side of the boat onto the water. He walked over the water just like it was solid ground. But after he had walked only a little way towards Jesus, he became very afraid and started to feel like he would sink. He cried out, "Lord, save me!" When Jesus heard Peter's frightened screams, He stretched out His hand and pulled Peter to Him. He told Peter, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt me?"

Then Jesus and Peter climbed back into the boat. The wind calmed and the waves became small and quiet once again. The Apostles fell to their knees and worshipped Jesus. "You are really the Son of God!" they said.

When we are in danger, we should call upon Him, and Jesus will come across the waters of temptation to save us. Where Jesus is, all is quiet and peaceful.

THE DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS

A long, long time ago, there was a little girl who was very sick. Her parents loved her very much, and they did everything they could do help her get better again. But nothing they did made any difference, and the little girl got sicker and sicker.

Finally her father, who was a rich man and an important ruler in one of the Jewish synagogues, heard about Jesus. He heard that Jesus was a great Teacher and had healed many, many sick people. So He decided to go to Jesus and ask Him to heal his daughter.

Jairus pushed his way through the crowd of people that always surrounded Jesus. He knelt at Jesus' feet and cried, "Lord, my daughter is almost dead! Please come and put Your hands upon her, because if You touch her, she will live."

Jesus went with Jairus to his house to heal the little girl. But when they got there, one of Jairus' servants came out with terrible news. He said that the little girl had just died, and now there was nothing that anyone could do.

Jairus sobbed and sobbed when he heard that his daughter had died. But Jesus put a hand on his shoulder and gently said to him, "Don't be afraid. Believe in Me and have faith, and your little girl will be safe."

They went inside the house to the little girl's room. There were many people there crying. When Jesus heard them, he asked them, "Why are you all crying like this? The little girl is not dead. She is only asleep."

Jesus went over and sat down on the little girl's bed. He held her hand and he said, "Wake up, child! I am here with you, wake up!" And the little girl woke up!

When she opened her eyes, she saw the gentle face of Jesus looking down at her. She jumped to her feet, healthy and strong. Her mother and father held her and hugged her. They wanted to tell everyone about the wonderful thing that Jesus had done, but Jesus told them not to. Instead, he told them to thank God quietly from the depths of their hearts.

THE MIRACLE OF THE LOAVES AND FISHES

One day, Jesus went out to the desert to talk to His Apostles. But so many people loved Jesus, that even when He went out into a dry place with nothing to eat and the sun shining down very, very hot, they followed Him there. Many of the people had traveled a long way and now they were tired and hungry.

Jesus was tired too, but He loved the people as much as they loved Him. So He went out to talk to the people. He taught them many good lessons about God and he healed those who were sick.

At last the Apostles asked Jesus to make the people go away so that they could go to a nearby village to eat and to sleep. But our Lord did not want to send the people away when they had come so far to see Him. So He turned to His Apostles and said, "Give them something to eat."

The Apostles told Jesus that they only had five loaves of bread and two fish to eat. It was not enough food to feed the many thousands of people who had come to see Jesus!

But Jesus told the Apostles to have the people all sit down. Then He picked up the bread and the fishes, and He looked up to heaven and blessed the food. Then He gave the food to the Apostles and told them to pass it out to the people. The Apostles were very surprised when they found that no matter how much food they passed out, there was always more left!

What a wonderful miracle Jesus had done, making sure that so many thousands of hungry people had enough to eat! All of the people who saw the miracle believed that Jesus must truly be the Savior, and they wanted to make him the king of the land. Jesus knew what they were thinking, but He was the King of Heaven, not the king of the earth. So he left the people and He and His Apostles sailed over a lake to the town of Capharnaum, and He spent the night praying there.

PROMISE OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

After the miracle of the loaves and fishes, large crowds followed our Lord wherever He went. He knew that the only reason they were following Him was because they wanted to see Him perform more miracles. They did not love God for His goodness like we do. Instead they only loved Him for His gifts. Jesus told them that He had not come to make their lives on earth better, but to show them the way to the life after death, and that He would give them food for eternal life in Heaven.

Jesus' words surprised and amazed the people, and they asked Him what He meant. Jesus replied, "I am the Bread of Life that was sent down from Heaven. Anyone that comes to me will never be hungry, and anyone who believes in me will never be thirsty. Anyone who eats My Body and drinks My Blood will have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day. For My Body is meat indeed, and My Blood is drink indeed."

Our Lord's words were simple, and everyone who heard them understood Him. But even though they understood him, they did not believe him, and they all left Jesus until only the Apostles remained. Jesus turned to them and asked, "Will you also go away?" Peter answered, "Lord, where would we go? You know the way to eternal life. We know and we believe that You are Christ the Son of God." Peter, a poor fisherman, was wiser than the educated people who had listened to Jesus.

SAINT PETER - THE HEAD OF JESUS' CHURCH

During one of Jesus' appearances after the Resurrection, He told His apostles to leave Jerusalem and go to Galilee. Here Jesus appeared to them again and after they ate together Jesus said to Peter: "Peter, who loves Me more than you?" Peter answered to Jesus how much he loved Him.

Jesus then told Peter that he was the "Rock" on which He would build His Church. He gave Peter the Keys to Heaven which made him the first Pope and gave him the responsibility to lead his followers and set up the Church.

One day in a Temple, he saw a crippled man who was begging for money. "Silver and gold I do not have," said Peter. "But what I have, I give you. In the name of Jesus, get up and walk." And the crippled man leaped to his feet.

Many people loved to hear him tell of Jesus. They became Christians and were baptized. But those who had put Jesus to death hated Peter also and wanted to kill him. Herod arrested Peter and put him in jail.

As Peter lay in prison, chains on his hands and feet, he suddenly felt someone standing near him. He looked up and saw a beautiful, strong person who took his hand and quietly led Peter out of prison while all the guards were asleep.

When they were safe outside the city, the stranger disappeared.

Then Peter knew that he was an angel sent by Jesus to save him.

Peter and the other apostles set off to spread the Words of Jesus to all the lands far and near. Peter left for Rome which was the capitol city of the Roman Empire.

There he preached Jesus' words and performed miracles until he was captured and crucified upside-down on Vatican Hill the St. Peter's Basilica is currently located. All of the Popes who have succeeded St. Peter, live and serve there.

THE TRANSFIGURATION

Sometimes the Apostles, though they were the friends of Jesus, were not sure who He was. They saw His mighty deeds. They listened to the wonderful things He told them. But He ate with them, He grew tired after a long day and He was hungry and thirsty at the end of a walk. Many people did not believe in Him. The Jewish priests said, "He will take away our power and money." The Romans said, "Who'd waste time listening to a poor carpenter?" The sinful said, "He will stop us from committing our ugly sins." The rich said, "Why hasn't He money like us?" A lot of people said, "We're too busy to listen to Him. Perhaps we will some other time." Of course, all that worried the Apostles. It often made them sad.

So one day Our Dear Lord decided to show them who He really was. He took them up to the top of a mountain called the Mount of Olives. His three closest friends walked with Him. Suddenly His face was bright as the sun. His garments shone with rays of light. He was so beautiful they could not look at Him. Two men came down from Heaven. They were Moses, the greatest man of the Old Law, and Elias, the greatest of the Prophets. They bowed to Him in reverence. The Apostles were so startled they fell on their faces. But they knew Jesus was not just a man. For He looked as God would look, with awesome power and beauty. They saw the greatest men of all the Old Law bow to Him. "Indeed," cried Peter "this is the Son of God."

JESUS THE CHILDREN'S FRIEND

Once, as our dear Lord was journeying through Judea and preaching, some faithful women brought their children to Him to be blessed. The disciples were angry when the women came, because it was the end of the day and Jesus was very tired. The disciples tried to send the mothers away so that Jesus could rest and restore his strength. But Jesus loved the little children and He knew that they loved him too, and He told the disciples that He was not too busy or tired to hold them and bless them.

Then Jesus sat down and opened His arms, and He gathered all of His little lambs close to His Sacred Heart, kissing their heads and listening to their sweet voices. Even the smallest children were not afraid, because they saw only love in the beautiful kind face that was looking at them so tenderly. Even the babies in their mothers' arms stretched out their hands to be caressed by Him! Such is the touch of Jesus to the souls of the pure at heart.

The children that gathered around Jesus were humble, good, and obedient, and that is why He loved them so much. If you want to stay close to Jesus, then you must be like those little ones. The older children must set a good example for the younger ones, for our dear Lord said that "such is the way of the Kingdom of Heaven."

THE PARABLE OF THE WICKED SERVANT

In another story, our Lord explained how the Kingdom of Heaven is like a king who wants to find out how much money his servants owe him.

The king called one of his servants to come to him. He asked the servant how much money the servant owed him. The servant replied that he owed the king a lot of money, but he didn't have anything to pay him back with. So the king ordered the servant and his family to be sold as slaves so that his debt could be paid.

The poor servant fell to his knees and begged the king for more time so he could work and pay all of the money back. The king felt sorry for the poor servant and decided not to sell him. He even decided to forgive the debt, so the servant didn't owe him any money at all!

Now free from his debt, he ran into another servant who owed him a very small amount of money. He forgot about how kindthe king had just been to him and told him that he had to pay him all the money he owed him right away. The other servant fell to his knees and begged for more time. He did not forgive him, and so the other servant was thrown into prison until his debt was paid.

The rest of the king's servants saw what had happened so they went to the king and told him. The king called the first servant to him once again. He told the servant, "You wicked servant! I was kind to you and promised that you didn't owe me any money because you begged me. You should have showed the same kindness to others." Then the king told the servant that now he still owed him all the money that he had before, and he had him thrown in prison until he was able to pay it.

Every time we go to God and tell Him we are sorry, He is happy to forgive us. Because God is so kind and forgives us so freely, we must show the same kindness to everyone else.

THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

One day, one of Jesus's followers asked Him what He meant when He said: "Love your neighbor as you love yourself." So Jesus told the following parable:

One day a traveller was walking down the road that led from the city of Jerusalem to the city of Jericho. There were robbers who would sometimes hide in the bushes or behind large rocks by the side of the road, waiting for people to steal from.

As the traveller was walking, he passed a group of robbers just like this. As soon as they saw him, they attacked him. They took everything they owned, even his clothes. Then they beat him and beat him until he was almost dead.

After a while, another traveller came walking down the road who was a rabbi. He kept walking without ever stopping to help.

Soon after that, a Levite came walking along and passed by him without even speaking to him.

Finally, a person ran to the traveller's side and bent over the wounded traveller with a face full of kindness. He washed the traveller's wounds and cleaned them, then he wrapped them up with bandages. Then the stranger took his own coat and put it around him to keep him warm.

After the kind stranger had done all of this, he put him on his donkey, and then he took him to the nearest inn. He gave the innkeeper some money and told him to take good care of the traveller and to give him everything that he needed to get better. Then the stranger went on his way.

This kind stranger was a Samaritan!

Jesus's followers were very surprised to hear Him tell a story where a Samaritan helped a Jew, because the two peoples disliked each other.

But Jesus explained to them that it didn't matter that the stranger who helped the traveller was a Samaritan. He showed kindness when even a rabbi and a Levite did not stop to help. The Samaritan had the love of God in his heart.

THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP

The Pharisees thought they were the only good people in the world. When Jesus sat with the poor and the sinners, they gossiped about Him and thought that He should not bother with people like that. But Jesus came to the earth to help sinners as well as people who were already good. So to help the Pharisees get rid of their pride, He told them the following parable:

There was once a shepherd who took care of a flock of one hundred sheep. Every day he brought his sheep to the places where the fields had plenty of green grass to eat, and he let them drink from the clear, cool streams. The shepherd loved all of his sheep very much, and he always walked in front of them leading the way. He knew that as long as his sheep were following him, nothing bad would happen to them.

But one dark, stormy day, one of the sheep stopped following the shepherd. It decided to go its own way instead, and soon it became horribly lost and very afraid. All by itself, it was in terrible danger.

But the shepherd did not let it stay lost for long. As soon as he realized it was missing, he left the other ninety-ninesheep in a safe place and went to look for the lost sheep. He looked everywhere, even in places that were scary and dangerous, and in places that hurt his feet to walk. But at last he heard a quiet, sad cry -- it was his lost little lamb. Quickly, the kind shepherd ran to help it. He picked it up and gently carried it all the way home.

When he got back, the shepherd called his neighbors to tell them the good news. He told them, "Celebrate with me, because I have found my lost little sheep!"

In this story, God is the shepherd, and all of the people in the world are sheep. God loves all of us very much, and He leads the way and protects us. He shows how to be good and how to be safe. But sometimes we are like the little sheep who ran away and got lost. Sometimes we commit sins and stray from the path that God has laid out for us. But God still loves us. As soon as we are sorry and ask for forgiveness, God will come and find us, and he will carry us back to goodness in His loving arms.

THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON

There was once a very rich man who lived in a beautiful home. He had everything that money could buy. He also had two sons who lived with him, and he loved them very much.

After a while, the man's younger son began to get tired of living with his father. He wanted to see the world. So he went to his father and asked him to give him money so he could go traveling. The father did as he was asked, and the ungrateful son left his home. He traveled and he spent all of his money very foolishly. He bought expensive things and he threw many parties for people who were not really his friends.

The day came when all of the young man's money ran out.

He went to a farmer for a job to take care of pigs, and he would get nothing to eat but the leftover scraps from the pigs' food.

One day, as the young man sat shivering in his rags, hungry and tired and sad. He thought about how even his father's lowest servants had been better off than he was. He was so sorry for everything that he done, and he made up his mind to go home and ask for forgiveness.

When the father saw his son come home, he ran to him and hugged him and kissed him.

The son was ashamed and with tears in his eyes he said, "Father, I have sinned against Heaven and against you. I am not worthy to be called your son!"

The father told his servants to bring out the best clothes and to prepare a feast for him. When the father's older son came back from working in the fields and saw what the father had given his brother, he became very angry. He went to his father and said, "Why are you giving all of these things to him?

But the father looked at his older son and explained, "I am happy because my son was dead, and now he has come to life again. I am celebrating because he was lost, and now he is found."

THE PARABLE OF THE LOST MONEY

Here is another parable that Jesus told to his followers:

Long, long ago, there lived a poor old woman who owned nothing except for ten silver coins. One day, the woman counted her coins and realized that she only had nine of them. She had lost one of her coins!

Every piece of silver was very special to the poor woman, so she did everything she could to find the coin that was lost. She looked everywhere, high and low. She took her broom and swept her house over and over again. She lit a candle, and she looked into every little nook and corner, lighting up the dark places. And then, at last, the coin was found! The woman was so, so happy. She could jump for joy! She was so excited that she told her neighbors and friends all about it.

In this parable, think of the woman as Jesus, and think of the lost coin as a sinner who has strayed too far from Him. Sinners can be hidden in dark corners away from everyone who cares about them, just like the little coins. But Jesus is loving and good, and he shines the light of His grace upon the poor sinners, just like the candle lit up the lost money. Sinners who are touched by our Lord's love and tenderness return to Him again.

When the angels in Heaven see the poor, sorry souls brought back to their loving Master, they are so happy! They sing praises to God over and over again at such a joyful sight!

THE PARABLE OF DIVES AND LAZARUS

One day, Jesus told the people who came to listen to Him the story of two men, one of them rich and one of them poor.

The rich man's name was Dives. He thought he was better than everyone else.

Dives had a very large and beautiful home, and he liked to invite his other rich friends to come and eat dinner with him. But outside the gate, there was a poor man: a beggar, named Lazarus. Lazarus was lying in front of Dives's door, waiting to be fed with the leftovers from his meal. But Dives was too selfish to give Lazarus anything to eat.

Not long after that, the poor beggar died. Angels came down to take care of his soul. They took him to purgatory, where all the good souls went to wait until the Savior came and opened the gates of Heaven. Abraham, who you remember reading about before, looked after all of the souls who waited in purgatory, and so when Lazarus got there, he took care of him too. Now soon after that, Dives also died. But since he had lived an evil life, he was not sent to purgatory like Lazarus. Instead, he was thrown into the fires of hell. He looked up into purgatory and saw Lazarus resting in peace and happiness. So he cried out, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me! Please send Lazarus down to bring me a drink of water, because I am burning up in fire."

Abraham looked down sadly. He shook his head and said, "Son, remember that good things happened to you in your life while bad things happened to Lazarus. But now, in the afterlife, good things are happening to Lazarus while bad things are happening to you."

Then Dives begged Abraham to bring Lazarus back to life. He wanted Lazarus to go and warn his family not to act like he had acted while he was alive, so that they would not be sent to hell for eternity. But Abraham would not do this either. Abraham knew that if the people on earth would not obey the voice of Moses and the prophets, they would not pay attention to a poor beggar, even if the beggar had come back from the dead.

THE TEN LEPERS

One day, as our Lord was walking to Jerusalem, He heard someone yelling His name. "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" someone cried. Jesus turned to look and a sad sight met His eyes.

Off in the distance stood ten very sick men. They were covered in terrible wounds and sores that were very ugly to look at. The disease that they had was called leprosy, and the people who had the disease were called lepers. Because the lepers were so sick, the healthy people did not want to be around them. They made the lepers live outside the walls of the city in uncomfortable little huts. No one cared about their suffering.

But when Jesus saw them, He felt sorry for them and decided to help them. He went to them and He cured them and He said, "Go to the priests in the Temple and show them that you are not sick anymore." When the priests saw that the lepers were not sick anymore, they let them come and live in the city again.

Nine of the lepers went to the city right away to tell everyone that they had gotten better. But one of the lepers went back to Jesus instead. He kneeled at Jesus' feet, praising Him and thanking Him for the miracle that He had done.

Jesus saw that though He had healed ten people, only one of them had come back to thank Him. He said, "Look! Even though I healed ten people, the only one who has come back to worship God is this one man." Gently He touched the man who had come back, helping him to get up on his feet. Then he said, "Go on your way, My friend, for your faith has made you healthy again!"

All ten of the lepers had faith. All of them believed in their hearts that God could cure them. But only one of the lepers was thankful to God for His great goodness.

THE PARABLE OF THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN

Another one of the parables that Jesus told was about two men who went into the temple to pray. One of the men was a Pharisee: a cold, proud man who thought that he was better than other people. The other one was a Publican who was a humble man.

When he got to the temple, the proud Pharisee chose a place to pray where everyone could see him. He prayed loud enough for everyone in the temple to hear him. He thanked God for making him better than his neighbors, and he also bragged about how he did not eat for two days every week to show his devotion to God. He said many proud things about himself. But the Pharisee forgot that God could see right through him and knew how proud he was in his heart. The Pharisee could fool everyone in the temple, but he could not fool God.

When the Publican got to the temple, he was respectful and humble. He stood far away from the people. In his heart he believed he was a wicked man, and he was very sorry for his sins. He was too sorry to even look up towards Heaven. He hit his cheats and said, "O God, be merciful to me, because I am a sinner!" Jesus explained to everyone who listened to this parable that when the Publican went home, all of his sins were forgiven. But the Pharisee loved himself and his own pride more than he loved God, and so God did not hold him as close to His Heart. God loves people who are humble and hates people who are proud.

There are many times when you are tempted to be proud and brag about things that you have done. Sometimes, you might even think that you are better than the people around you. But you should remember than no matter how much poorer than you they are, or how different from you they are, everyone is equal in God's sight. To stay close to God you must be humble, whether or not you are rich or poor.

THE PARABLE OF THE LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD

One day, Jesus was talking to his Apostles. Peter asked Jesus if He was going to give them a big reward someday, since they had left their homes and families and everything they owned to follow Him. But Jesus wanted the Apostles and everyone who came after them to be good because it was the right thing to do, not because they expected them to be rewarded. To show the Apostles what He meant, Jesus told them a parable:

Once there was a man who owned a vineyard. When it was time for the grapes to be harvested, he woke up very, very early in the morning and found some men standing around. He promised to pay them one penny every day if they worked for him harvesting his grapes, and they agreed. The man went back home and ate breakfast, and then he went out again. He found more men standing around, and he hired them too, again promising to pay them one penny every day. He went home and ate lunch, and then he went out again and did the same thing. Finally he went out one last time right after dinner and hired even more men. When night came, the man went out to his vineyard to pay the men he had hired. He told them to get in a line with the ones he had hired last at the front of the line and the ones he had hired first at the back of the line. Then he went down the line and gave them each a penny.

The men who had been hired very early in the day were angry, because they were paid the same amount as the men who had been hired late in the day and had only been working for a couple of hours. But the man who owned the vineyard told them that it was silly of them to complain that he was not treating them fairly. He had given them exactly what he had told them he would.

In this story, God is like the owner of the vineyard, and the men who were hired to harvest the grapes are like all the people here on earth. If the people are good and listen to Him, God will treat them fairly and open the way of the Kingdom of Heaven to them, no matter if they come to Him late or early.

THE RAISING OF LAZARUS

In the little of Bethany, there lived two sisters named Martha and Mary. Martha and Mary had a brother named Lazarus. Jesus loved this little family very much, and once in a while He would go to visit them.

One day, however, something very sad happened to the family. Lazarus became very sick. Right away, Martha and Mary sent a letter to Jesus to tell him that their brother was sick. They thought that since Jesus loved them so much, he would come right away, just like we sometimes think that Jesus should answer our prayers as soon as we say them. But Jesus did not come right away. He did not go to see Martha and Mary until days later. By then, Lazarus had already been dead and buried for four days.

When Martha heard from some of her friends that Jesus was coming, she ran out to meet Him. She was very sad that her brother was dead, and she said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died." Martha had such deep faith in Jesus that when she was sad, the first thing she did was go to Him. Jesus was touched by Martha's faith. He said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha believed what He said, and she went to get her sister, Mary. When Mary saw Jesus, she fell to the ground in front of Him and began to cry. The tender Heart of Jesus was touched with pity, and He cried with her.

So Jesus went to Lazarus's tomb, and He ordered the men to roll away the stone that covered the entrance. In a loud voice, He said: "Lazarus, come out!"

Without even a moment's pause, Lazarus came out alive again! He went and hugged his sisters and his friends, and they were so happy to see him again. Martha, Mary, and Lazarus thanked and praised Jesus over and over for how kind He had been to them. And Jesus was very happy with them, because they showed Him so much love and kindness in return.

THE PARABLE OF THE FOOLISH FRIENDS

Now, once there were a bride and groom who had ten friends. When the bride and groom got married, the friends went to the their house to wait for them with their lamps. Five of these friends were wise and they had brought lots and lots of oil for their lamps. But five of the friends were foolish and had come without enough oil for their lamps.

The bride and the groom took a very long time to get to their house. It was so late that their friends all fell asleep waiting for them. Then suddenly they heard someone outside yell: "Look, look, the bride and the groom are coming!" Right away, the friends all woke up and lit their lamps to make the house warm and bright for the happy couple. But the five foolish friends did not have enough oil to light their lamps. They said to the five wise friends, "Give us your oil! We can't light our lamps!" The wise friends shook their heads and said, "We won't have enough for our lamps if we give it all to you. Go run and buy some more!"

So the foolish friends ran out of the house to go and buy some more oil. But while they were away, the bride and the groom finally got back to their house. They happily met their five wise friends with their brightly burning lamps, and they locked the door behind them.

After a while, the foolish friends came back to the house and saw that the door was shut and locked. The knocked and knocked, shouting "Open the door, open the door!"

From inside the house, the new couple answered them: "You were not here when we came home, and so we do not know you. Keep better watch in the future, because you should always expect to be surprised!"

Jesus wanted to teach his disciples to think of the bride and groom as God, and think of the friends as the people here on earth. The friends did not know when the bride and groom were coming, just like we do not know when we will be called to Heaven. Even if God calls us suddenly to Heaven, we must be ready to meet Him.

PALM SUNDAY

Our Lord Jesus had so many followers and performed so many miracles that the big, important people in the country where he lived were terrified of him. They were afraid that he was so popular and powerful, that he would try to take over and become the king. The Jewish Council held a meeting to talk about what to do about Jesus. They decided that the best thing to do was to put Jesus to death. A large sum of money was offered to anyone who would give Jesus to them so they could kill him.

During this time, Jesus had gone away to hide in a wild part of the country where nobody lived. He knew that the Hebrews would try to hurt Him. Jesus was not hiding because He was afraid to die, but He knew that His death was not supposed to come until it was time to celebrate Passover. So until then, he waited. His enemies looked for Him everywhere, but they could not find Him.

Finally it was time for our Lord to leave his hiding place, so He left the wilderness and began the journey to Jerusalem. On the way, he stopped in the little village of Bethany. He spent the Sabbath there with His Apostles and with His friends Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. As they were all at supper, Mary came into the room with a vase full of very expensive perfume. She knelt before Jesus, and she poured the perfume over His feet. But to use perfume that was very, very expensive, like Mary did, was very strange.

Judas, who kept track of the Apostles' money, thought that it was a waste to use such expensive perfume. He asked, "Why did you waste this perfume so sinfully? You should have sold it so you could give the money to the poor."

The next morning, Jesus and His Apostles continued to Jerusalem. As they walked, large crowds of people followed them. The people sang hymns and waved the leaves of palm trees in the air. As they came near to Jerusalem, they began to shout: "Hail to the King! Hail to Him Who comes in the name of the Lord!"

JESUS WASHES THE FEET OF HIS APOSTLES

On Wednesday night, the Jewish Council was meeting again to talk about what they should to do Jesus. Suddenly, a messenger arrived. He said that He would deliver Jesus right into their hands! And who was this messenger who was so willing to give the innocent Jesus to His enemies? It was none other than the traitor Judas, one of Jesus's closest disciples. He was one of the chosen few who had been called to be in the company of Jesus.

On Thursday evening, Jesus sat down with His Apostles to eat the Last Supper. After they had been sitting for a little while, Jesus got up and filled a tub up with water. Then He knelt and began to wash the feet of His Apostles. For the Jews, it was a tradition for the servants to wash the feet of their masters. But even though He is our Lord and Master, Jesus still washed the feet of those who were less than Him. What a lesson Jesus taught us! We should remember how humble He was, and do our best to never be too proud.

The sight of his Lord kneeling down to wash his feet was too much for the Apostle Peter to look at. "Lord," he cried, "why are you washing my feet?! You should never wash my feet! I am just your servant."

But Jesus answered, "If you do not let Me wash your feet, then you will not be My follower anymore."

When Peter heard this, he begged Jesus, "Then please, do not only wash my feet! Also wash my hands and my head!"

So Jesus continued to wash the feet of all of His Apostles. He even washed the feet of the traitor, Judas. Even today, Jesus washes away the sin on our souls, just like He washed the dirt off of His Apostles' feet so many years ago.

THE LAST SUPPER

After everyone's feet had been washed, Jesus sat back down at the table and ate the Holy Supper with His Apostles.

After a while, Jesus got up again. He picked up the bread and blessed it, and then He split it into pieces and gave it to them. He said, "Take this and eat it. This is My Body, which will be delivered for you. Do this in memory of Me."

Then He picked up the cup of wine and blessed it, and then He gave it to them for each of them to drink from.He said, "Take this and drink it. This is My Blood, which will be shed for you and for many others so that your sins may be forgiven. Do this in memory of Me."

This was the first Holy Communion, given to the Apostles by Jesus. God gave us all that He possessed: He gave us Himself.

After that, our Lord said goodbye to the Apostles. They were so sad to see him leave, but He promised that He would come back soon. Then Jesus went out into the Garden of Olives to pray, and the Apostles followed Him.

THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN

When He reached the entrance to the Garden of Gethsemani, our Lord told His Apostles to wait outside and pray while He went in alone to pray by Himself.

Praying by himself in the garden, Jesus began to cry. His eyes were full of tears, and His heart felt like it was breaking. Drops of His Precious Blood began to drip from his skin like sweat, hurting him greatly. He was crying because He already knew about the terrible things that were soon going to happen to Him. He knew that He was going to die on the Cross, and He knew that it was our sins that caused Him so much pain.

Jesus got up off of his knees and went back outside to go and see the Apostles. But when he got to them, he found them all asleep. So He went back into the garden and began to pray again. He was in so much pain. He cried out to God, "Father, is it possible for there to be any other way to save the people from their sins? If there is, please let it be done, because I am afraid and in pain. But Father, if this is what You want Me to do, then I pray that Your will be done. I will obey You always."

Finally, after saying his prayers, Jesus became calm. He went back outside of the garden again and woke up His Apostles. He told them that a traitor was nearby, and He was right. At that very moment, a group of soldiers led by Judas appeared. Judas went up to Jesus and kissed Him, and that is how the soldiers knew who Jesus was.

Judas was Jesus' friend. Jesus would have done anything to help Judas, if Judas had asked Him. All that Jesus asked of Judas in return was his love.

Jesus did not fight or argue when the soldiers arrested Him. He let them put Him in chains, and then He let them drag Him through the city streets like a criminal and put Him in prison. Jesus suffered through all of this pain because He loves us all so very much.

THE TRIAL AND SCOURGING OF JESUS

When He returned from Gethsemani, Jesus was led before Caiphas, who was the High Priest of the Jews. Caiphas asked Him many questions, but Jesus stood there silent and meek, not answering any of them. At last Caiphas asked Him if He was Christ, the Son of God. Jesus replied, "I am indeed." So He was found guilty of blasphemy.

Jesus was then taken away to a dirty prison, and while He was there He was insulted by the rude soldiers.

When morning came, Jesus was taken to Pilate, the Roman governor. Pilate was a coward and did not wish to make a judgement about Jesus, so he sent him to King Herod. Herod treated Jesus like a fool, and then he sent Him back to Pilate. Pilate still did not want to make a judgement, but the people shouted and demanded that Jesus be killed. So Pilate ordered our dear Lord to be crucified.

The Jews were cruel to criminals who were sentenced to die upon a cross, and that is how they treated our dear Lord, too. He was stripped naked and tied to a pillar, and the cruel soldiers whipped His Sacred Body until His Precious Blood covered the ground.

Not happy with this cruelty, the soldiers made fun of Him. They threw an old purple rag across his wounded shoulders and sat him on a rock that they pretended was a throne. They wove a crown of thorns for His Sacred Head, put a reed into His hands for a scepter, and they blindfolded Him. Then they bowed before Him and struck Him in the face, saying: "Look, it's the King of the Jews!"

All of this intense suffering was not enough. The soldiers laughed at Him and spat in His face. They took up their sticks and beat the sharp thorns deep into the Head and Face of Jesus!

Pray always to our dear Lord to keep you safe from mortal sin. It was mortal sin alone that was the cause of the cruelty that Jesus suffered.

JESUS CARRIES THE CROSS

After Pilate passed a sentence of death on Jesus, the soldiers took Him, and placed a heavy cross on His wounded shoulders. They led Him to Calvary, which was the place for the execution of criminals.

As Jesus passed through the streets, His strength failed, and He fell three times. Many people shouted at Him and spat on Him. His executioners, seeing He could not carry the cross any further, asked Simon the Cyrene, who they met on the way, to pick it up and help Jesus carry it to Calvary. Together with Jesus, two thieves were also sentenced to be crucified and were made to go up to Calvary.

Among the people that followed Jesus to Calvary were many women, weeping and crying including his dear mother Mary. One holy woman named Veronica wiped Jesus' bloody face with a cloth. The cloth she used showed Jesus' face impression in blood and is called Veronica's Veil. He turned to the people who were there for Him, and tried to console them. Then, with the kindest words, He told them not to weep for Him, but for themselves and for their children.

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JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

In the morning, the soldiers put a heavy Cross on Jesus' back, and they made Him carry it all the way to Calvary, which was the hill where Jesus was going to be crucified.

Only a few of Jesus' friends were there with Him, along with His beloved Mother.

When Jesus arrived at the top of the hill of Calvary. the soldiers tore off His clothes. Then they laid the Cross on the ground, and they made Jesus lie down on top of it. They hammered long nails through His hands and His feet into the wood of the Cross. What terrible pain Jesus suffered! After Jesus was nailed to the Cross, the soldiers picked up the Cross and put it into a hole in the ground. Jesus hung on the Cross, bleeding, his crown of thorns knocked to one side on His head. Mary the Blessed Mother and St. John the Apostle stood at the foot of the Cross, looking up at Jesus and crying tears for our Lord.

Two thieves were also crucified on the hill of Calvary. One of them looked over at Jesus and became very sorry for his own sins. He cried out to Jesus for mercy. Jesus turned to him with his eyes full of love, and He said softly, "Amen, Amen. Before the end of today, you shall be with Me in Heaven." Even as he suffered the pain of being crucified, joy filled the heart of the thief, because he knew he had been forgiven. For many long hours, Jesus hung on the cross, suffering pain that it would be impossible to describe. Finally, after a long, long time, the earth shook, the dead rolled over in their graves, and the rocks smashed apart. And at that moment, Jesus died on the Cross.

On the night of that first Good Friday, Jesus' Body was taken down from the Cross by a few of his faithful friends. Tenderly, they put Him in the arms of His Blessed Mother.

THE BURIAL

In the middle of the night when no one could see, a faithful friend of Jesus took His Sacred Body and prepared It to be buried. He rubbed it with sweet-smelling spices and wrapped it in linen cloths, and then he laid It respectfully in a new tomb. The disciples rolled a large stone in front of the entrance, then slowly returned to Jerusalem.

The Jews were afraid that Jesus' friends would try to take His Sacred Body, so they put the High Priest's symbol on the entrance to the tomb and left some soldiers to guard it.

For three days, the Body of Jesus was in the tomb. But the Soul of Jesus was somewhere else!

The moment that our Lord died on the Cross, His Soul went to purgatory, where there were millions of good souls waiting for the gates of Heaven to be opened. Do you remember all of the Old Testament stories of how God had promised to those who believed in Him that He would send His Divine Son to redeem them?

St. Joseph was there, St. Anne and St. Joachim, the parents of the Blessed Mother, and the prophets and the patriarchs. For the three days that Jesus was in purgatory, it must have been Heaven for the souls who were trapped there, so great was their happiness.

THE RESURRECTION

Early on Easter morning, the Soul of Jesus left purgatory and returned to His Sacred Body in the tomb. Once again, Jesus was alive. He passed through the door of the tomb. Then there was an earthquake, and a shining angel came down from Heaven. The angel rolled away the stone and sat on top of it.

A short time later, Mary Magdalene and some other faithful women went to visit the tomb. When they got there, they saw that it was empty. Mary Magdalene was horrified because she thought that someone had stolen Jesus' Body. She ran back to tell the Apostles. The Apostles Peter and John went to the tomb and saw that what Mary said was true. They looked everywhere, but they could not find Jesus' Body. Sad and confused, the Apostles returned to the city.

But Mary Magdalene, who owed so much to the mercy of Jesus, stayed behind after the two Apostles had left. She stood next to the tomb, crying. Then she looked up and was surprised to see that in the tomb there were two angels standing where the Jesus's Body had been laid. They asked her why she was crying, and she said, "Because someone has taken away the Body of my Lord, and I don't know where they put Him."

As she spoke, she heard a voice behind her say, "Mary, why are you crying? Who are you looking for?"

Mary thought it might be the gardener who spoke, so she answered, "Oh, sir, if you were the one who carried His body away, please tell me where you put Him so I can come and get Him."

Again, the voice spoke: "Mary!" And the second time she heard it, she finally recognized her Lord and Master. She gasped and turned around to kneel at His feet, but he gently stopped her and said, "Do not touch me, because I have not gone to My Father yet. But go to the rest of My friends and tell them: I will go to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God." Then he disappeared, and Mary hurried back to the city to tell the Apostles about the wonderful miracle that she had seen.

JESUS APPEARS TO HIS APOSTLES

For forty days, our risen Lord visited with His Apostles. Jesus would appear among them suddenly when they weren't expecting Him. Towards evening of the day Jesus rose from the dead, two of His Apostles were going to Emmaus, a little town close to Jerusalem.

On the way Jesus appeared near them and began to speak to them, but they did not recognize Him. They told of how sad they were. One of them of them asked Him if He was a stranger, and how it was that He had not heard what had happened in Jerusalem.

Jesus began talking about the prophecies of Moses, and continued on about the other prophets, explaining to them the things that related to Himself, explaining that it was necessary for Jesus to suffer as He did.

As they came near the town, He pretended to go further, but they asked Him to stay with them, as it was night time.

He stayed and sat down at a table with them. He took bread, and blessed it, and gave it to them. At once, their eyes were opened, and they knew it was Jesus; but He then disappeared from their sight.

After this the two disciples got up and quickly went back to Jerusalem. There they found the eleven apostles very excited, because they had just been told that Peter had seen Jesus. Then the two disciples told them that they saw Jesus too.

While they were still speaking Jesus entered the room where they were all together. He said to them; "Peace be with you." Jesus showed them His hands and His feet, and told them to touch Him.

Thomas, one of the apostles, was not there when Jesus appeared to the others. He wouldn't believe what the other Apostles told him unless he saw it with his own eyes. Jesus came back eight days later and Thomas put his hand into the wound on Jesus' body. Thomas fell to his knees and believed it was Jesus.

THE ASCENSION

After Jesus had finished speaking of the Holy Spirit, He led His apostles out to the Mount of Olives. There He said to them: "All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go into the whole world and preach the Gospel to all people, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: and, behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the world."

When Jesus finished speaking He lifted up His hands and blessed His apostles. While He was blessing them, He slowly rose from the earth and ascended into heaven, where He sits, and will sit forever, on the right hand of His Father.

Lost in wonder and overcome with sorrow, the apostles continued to look up at Him as He ascended, until a cloud covered Him from their view.

While the apostles were still looking up to heaven, two angels in white robes came and said to them: "This Jesus, whom you have seen ascending into heaven, shall come again."

When the apostles heard this they fell upon the ground and praised God. Then they got up and returned to Jerusalem to wait for the promises made to them to come true.

THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (PENTECOST)

Ten days after the Ascension of Jesus, the Jewish Pentecost was celebrated. On this day, while the apostles and disciples were meeting together in a room, they suddenly heard a sound that was like a great wind. At the same time, long tongues of fire came down and sat on the heads of each one in the room.

In an instant they all were filled with the Holy Spirit. No longer afraid, the apostles went out to preach about Jesus and His crucifixion.

At that time Jerusalem was filled with strangers who had come up from all parts of the land to celebrate the feast of Pentecost. Soon the news about Jesus spread everywhere, and in a short time many people gathered around the house where the apostles were. The people were surprised when they heard the apostles speak because they spoke in their own languages!

Amazed and confused they asked: "Aren't these Galileans who speak? And how is it that every one of us hears our own language being spoken?" But others said: "They drank too much wine."

Then Peter stood up and with the eleven apostles said: "I tell you that these men are not drunk, but they have fulfilled the words of the prophet Joel: And it shall come to pass and I will pour out my Spirit upon all people."

"And also, hear this, Jesus of Nazareth, a man who, by the wonders and miracles He brought to you, proved Himself sent by God, was crucified and put to death by evil men; but now He is in heaven, seated at the right hand of God. It is He that has poured out His Spirit upon us, as you see; and He is the Lord of heaven and earth."

When the crowd hear this, they were confused and asked Peter what they should do. He answered: "Ask forgiveness and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ."

Because of this many people were baptized. This began the miraculous start of the Church's spreading throughout the land.

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THE APOSTLES SPREAD JESUS' CHURCH

Shortly after Peter's first sermon to the Jews, and the miraculous conversion of thousands, Peter and John gave talks and were curing people in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. At this time, a man named Saul became one of the biggest persecutors of the Christians.

While riding his horse on his way Damascus to hunt down Christians, a bright light suddenly came down around him and struck him like a bolt of lightning. He fell to the ground and, at the same time, a voice said to him: "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" Saul asked who spoke to him; when the voice said, "I am Jesus, Who you persecute." Trembling and afraid, Saul asked what he should do. Jesus told him to rise and go into the city. Saul rose, but discovered he was blind. His companions led him into Damascus, where he remained for three days. A man named Ananias was commanded by God to go to Saul and place his hands upon him. As soon as Ananias touched Saul, his sight came back. Soul rose and was baptized. His name was changed to Paul. With all the energy of a new convert, Paul began to preach about Jesus. All that heard him were astonished.

While St. Paul was preaching in Asia and Europe, the other apostles were also spreading Jesus' Church to the farthest known lands. Everywhere they preached the Gospel, they established churches and appointed bishops to guide the people. Some went to Persia, others to Arabia, while some went all the way to India. By the end of the first century there was no country known that had not heard of Christ, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. During this time some of the apostles and two of their disciples, wrote short histories of Our Savior's life. St. Paul and some of the other apostles also wrote letters, or, as they are better known, "Epistles," of instruction, either to churches they had started themselves, or to others that asked them for advice. Over time these writings were gathered together, and became known under the name of the New Testament.

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